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Essay on Milton

Thomas Babington Macaulay Macaulay, Edward Leeds Gulick

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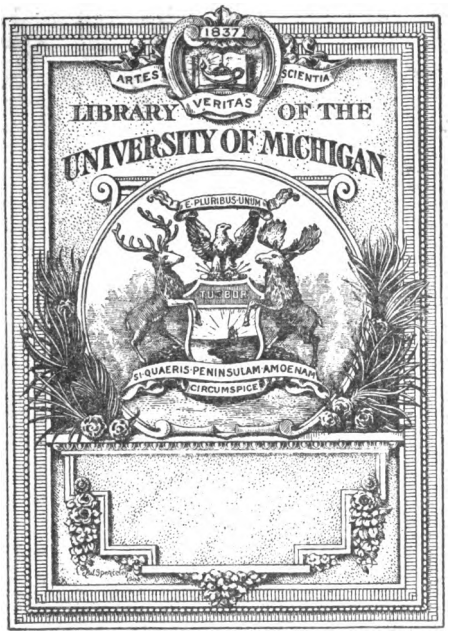

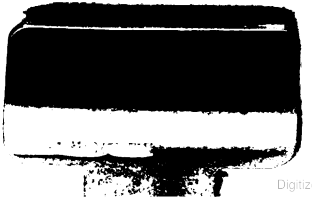

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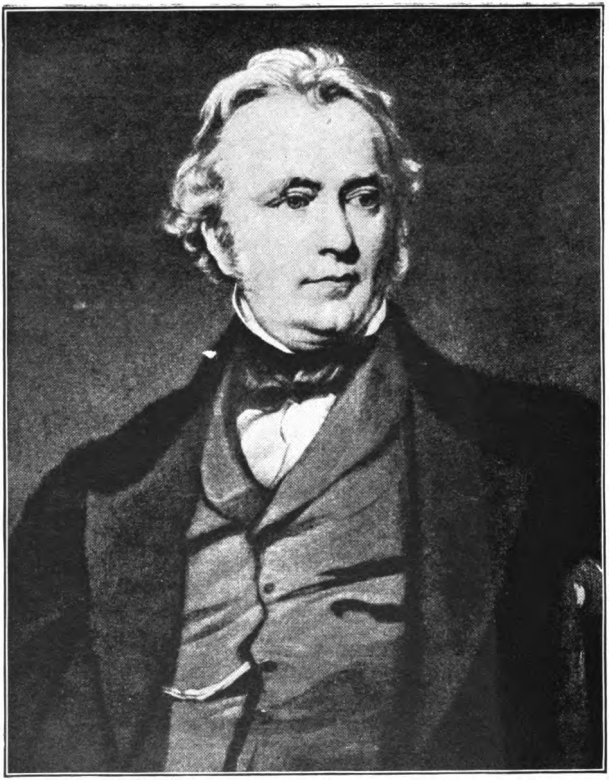

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GATEWAY SERIES

ESSAY ON MILTON

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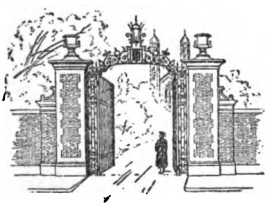
BY

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY

Macaulay

EDITED BY

EDWARD LEEDS GULICK, A.M. (HARV.)
MASTER OF ENGLISH IN THE LAWRENCEVILLE SCHOOL



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ENTERED AT STATIONERS' HALL, LONDON.

MACAULAY'S MILTON.

W. P. I

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TO

THE REV. SAMUEL PENNIMAN LEEDS, D.D.

This Volume is Inscribed

AS A TOKEN OF LOVING LOYALTY, BY ONE WHO OWES
TO HIM, AMONG A THOUSAND OTHER DEBTS,
A FIRST INTRODUCTION TO THE
ESSAYS OF MACAULAY

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PREFACE

THIS edition of the *Essay on Milton* has been prepared with a purpose to make it simple, concrete, and interesting. To secure simplicity the editor has reduced the amount of information sometimes presented as notes in similar editions. It has been thought well to present scarcely more facts than the pupil may be required to learn; and, in general, only such explanations as are needed to elucidate the passage.

On the other hand, the editor has sought to give interest by treating the biography and history somewhat fully, presenting the personal sides of the lives of Macaulay and Milton as well as the public aspect of their work.

EDWARD LEEDS GULICK.

LAWRENCEVILLE, N.J.

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INTRODUCTION

THE name of Macaulay is familiar to successive generations of school boys and girls who have read the *Horatius*, and in whose ears Macaulay's *History of England* has been a household word. With the study of his *Essay on Milton* must go a knowledge of his life, his personality, his work, and his times.

His personality, so vivid, simple, and direct, will furnish a key to his work, explaining both his successes as author and debater, and his limitations as thinker and philosopher.

Few persons are so easily understood as Macaulay. There was a perfect openness in his life, and his biographer has no concealments to make. His was not a complex or confused character. The traits which were manifested in his youth are seen to be fundamental in his maturity. There is thus a delightful unity in his life, his work, and his works. What he was in thought, that he was in his words and in his acts.

We shall first consider the main facts of Macaulay's private life and character, then make a study of the political tendencies of his times, and then indicate the honorable part played by him in the politics of England. The subsequent study of Macaulay as an author will

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thus present him and his work against the background of his biography and the history of his times.

A short paragraph on the *Essay on Milton* will serve as a transition to the life and times of Milton himself. After the text of the *Essay* and its notes, will be given in the Appendix that delightful product of Macaulay's youthful pen, *A Conversation between Mr. Abraham Cowley and Mr. John Milton touching the Great Civil War.* It ought to be read by the class, for it was a favorite essay with Macaulay himself, and will be found both interesting and profitable to the student of the *Essay on Milton.*

I. Private Life of Macaulay

Thomas Babington Macaulay was born at Rothley Temple, in Leicestershire, England, on October 25, 1800. His father was in many respects a remarkable man. In his youth he had, in the West Indies, seen at close range the evils of slavery, and had given up the prospects of business success in order to devote himself to agitation for the abolishment of slavery in the British Colonies, which has been called "the most disinterested, and perhaps the most successful, popular movement which history records." The connection of Tom Macaulay with such a father and with his associates exerted a formative influence on the character of the boy, which may be traced throughout his life of perfect integrity and disinterested service.

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As a child he was remarkable enough to give to his affectionate but wise mother the confident belief that he was a genius.

An extraordinary memory was his from the earliest days, which resulted in a precocious taste for reading and power in the use of words. Very familiar are the stories of his mature use of language while still a child. "Thank you, madam, the agony is abated," was his reply to an inquiry concerning his scalded legs. "Cursed be Sally; for it is written, Cursed is he that removeth his neighbor's landmark," was quoted against his nurse who had disarranged his "farm" staked out with oyster-shells in the garden. When he was sent to school, his mother explained to him that he must now learn to study without his accustomed slice of bread and butter. "Yes, Mamma, industry shall be my bread and attention my butter."

His use of the pen was even more remarkable than his power of speech. In 1808 his mother writes: —

"My dear Tom continues to show marks of uncommon genius. He gets on wonderfully in all branches of his education, and the extent of his reading, and of the knowledge he has derived from it, are truly astonishing in a boy not yet eight years old. He is at the same time as playful as a kitten. . . . You will believe that to him we never appear to regard anything he does as anything more than a schoolboy's amusement. He took it into his head to write a compendium of universal history about a year ago, and he really contrived to give a toler-

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ably connected view of the leading events from the Creation to the present time, filling about a quire of paper. He told me one day that he had been writing a paper which Henry Daly was to translate into Malabar, to persuade the people of Travancore to embrace the Christian religion. On reading it, I found it to contain a very clear idea of the leading facts and doctrines of that religion, with some strong arguments for its adoption. He was so fired with reading Scott's *Lay* and *Marmion*, the former of which he got entirely, and the latter almost entirely, by heart, merely from his delight in reading them, that he determined on writing himself a poem in six cantos, which he called *The Battle of Cheviot*."

"It is worthy of note," writes his biographer, Sir George Trevelyan, "that the voluminous writings of his childhood, dashed off at headlong speed in the odds and ends of leisure from school study and nursery routine, are not only perfectly correct in spelling and grammar, but display the same lucidity of meaning and scrupulous accuracy in punctuation and the other minor details of the literary art which characterize his mature works."

"It was scarcely ever," writes one who knew him from the very first, "that the consciousness was expressed by either of his parents of the superiority of their son over other children. Indeed, with his father I never remember any such expression."

"Judging others by himself," says Trevelyan, "he credited the world at large with an amount of information which certainly few have the ability to acquire or the

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capacity to retain. If his parents had not been so diligent in concealing from him the difference between his own intellectual stores and those of his neighbors, it is probable that less would have been heard of Lord Macaulay's schoolboy achievements."

At the two preparatory schools which he attended the regular work made slight tax upon his powers and left him time to indulge that taste for reading which became a confirmed habit.

"The secret of his immense acquirements," says Trevelyan, "lay in two invaluable gifts of nature: an unerring memory, and the capacity for taking in at a glance the contents of a printed page. During the first part of his life he remembered whatever caught his fancy without going through the process of consciously getting it by heart." . . . "At one period of his life he was known to say that, if by some miracle of vandalism all copies of *Paradise Lost* and *The Pilgrim's Progress* were destroyed off the face of the earth, he would undertake to reproduce them both from recollection whenever a revival of learning came." . . . "Macaulay's extraordinary faculty of assimilating printed matter at first sight remained the same through life. To the end he read books faster than other people skimmed them, and skimmed them as fast as any one else could turn the leaves. 'He seemed to read through the skin,' said one who had often watched the operation. And this speed was not in his case obtained at the expense of accuracy."

In 1818 Macaulay went into residence at Trinity Col-

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lege, Cambridge. Here he developed his social gifts besides doing the required tasks and continuing the habit of omnivorous reading. Among other friendships made was that with Charles Austin, who is credited with having converted Macaulay from his father's Tory opinions to become a supporter of Whig principles. The fascination of their conversation appears in the following anecdote: —

"While on a visit to Lord Lansdowne at Bowood, Austin and Macaulay happened to get upon college topics one morning at breakfast. When the meal was finished, they drew their chairs to either end of the chimney-piece, and talked at each other across the hearth-rug as if they were in the first-floor room in the Old Court of Trinity. The whole company, — ladies, artists, politicians, and diners-out, — formed a silent circle around the two Cantabs, and, with a short break for lunch, never stirred till the bell warned them that it was time to dress for dinner."

In the Debating Society his fluent tongue and vast fund of information made him a formidable antagonist and prepared him for his speeches in Parliament.

His career at Cambridge was as notable for its omissions as for its inclusions. Mathematics he detested and never mastered. Science and philosophy he seems not to have studied at the University, and the defect was not supplied later. The failure to educate himself in these departments was to some extent at least the cause of certain deficiencies in his later work. He was conscious of

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this, as is shown in a letter written near the end of his life: —

"If a man brings away from Cambridge self-knowledge, accuracy of mind, and habits of strong intellectual exertion, he has gained more than if he had made a display of showy Etonian scholarship and got three or four Brown's Medals. . . . I hope I do not overrate my own place in the estimation of society. Such as it is, I would not give a halfpenny to add to the consideration which I enjoy all the consideration that I should derive from having been senior wrangler. But I often regret, and even acutely, my want of a senior wrangler's knowledge of physics and mathematics; and I regret still more some habits of mind which a senior wrangler is certain to possess."

Though failing to receive the highest honors at the University, he won many medals and prizes for excellence in English verse, Latin declamation, etc. His Essay on *The Conduct and Character of William the Third*, won for him a prize of ten pounds, and, what is more important, directed his thought to a subject which occupied his interest throughout his life, and upon which he wrote his masterpiece — *The History of England*. He won a Craven University scholarship, and in 1824 he attained the object for which he had so long striven — a Fellowship in his college.

After leaving the University he studied law and was admitted to the bar in 1826. His interest, however, he never really gave to his profession, being, like Burke and

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Scott, fascinated by the charms of literature. But he must have been faithful in his legal studies, for his work in India on the codification of the laws showed a thorough mastery of the principles of English law.

Before passing on to consider his life work, we should glance at the happiness of the home life of which he was the center. During the vacations which he spent at home, games, frolics, laughter, fun of all sorts, were the occupations of the large family of boys and girls. In reading aloud, capping verses, puns, and doggerel verse, Tom was always in the lead. There seems to have been no limit to his resources of good spirits and good nature. He was the idol of the home, and was soon to be its mainstay; for the father's failure in business, due to his absorption in antislavery agitation, threw upon the eldest son the task of repairing the fortunes of the family and of supplying to brothers and sisters what their father could not now afford. Thus was the young Macaulay faced with a stern necessity at the very moment when his work of preparation was at an end.

Macaulay's contributions to the *Quarterly Magazine* were of importance chiefly because they introduced him to Jeffrey, editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, who was looking for some clever young man to give life to that rather ponderous magazine. In the August number appeared Macaulay's *Essay on Milton*, and thenceforth articles from his pen were frequent. The great success of that article made him famous, and opened to him the hospitable doors of social London.

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A speech of his, delivered at a meeting of the Anti-slavery Society, had won the ear of the public, and his essays in the *Edinburgh Review* sustained his fame as a thinker and writer. In 1830 Lord Lansdowne intimated to Macaulay that he had been much struck by the articles on Mill, and that he wished to be the means of introducing their author to public life. He was accordingly elected to Parliament, without opposition or expense, as a member for Calne.

"And so," says Trevelyan, "on the eve of the most momentous conflict that ever was fought out by speech and vote within the walls of a senate house, the young recruit went gayly to his post in the ranks of that party whose coming fortunes he was prepared loyally to follow, and the history of whose past he was destined eloquently, and perhaps imperishably, to record."

Macaulay's part in the debates upon the great Reform Bill was of capital importance. His extraordinary abilities as a debater gave him a position of influence in the councils of his party, and his engaging powers of conversation made him a lion in London society. Nothing succeeds like success. The progress of Macaulay's successes was unbroken. In May, 1832, he was appointed one of the Commissioners of the Board of Control, which represented the crown in its relation to the East Indian directors. In 1833 he was chosen one of the members of the Supreme Council of India. The attraction of this post for Macaulay was due to its salary. He wrote to his sister: —

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"The advantages are very great. It is a post of the highest dignity and consideration. The salary is ten thousand pounds a year. I am assured by persons who know Calcutta intimately, and who have themselves mixed in the highest circles and held the highest offices at that presidency, that I may live in splendor there for five thousand a year, and may save the rest of the salary with the accruing interest. I may therefore hope to return to England at only thirty-nine, in the full vigor of life, with a fortune of thirty thousand pounds. A larger fortune I never desired."

His wish for an independent income was in behalf also of his brothers and sisters, one of whom, Hannah, accompanied him to India, and presided over his establishment in Calcutta. Her marriage before the end of the year to Sir Charles Trevelyan, a rising Indian official, resulted in his winning a brother instead of losing a sister. "With the coming of children, his overflowing affection found a new outlet, and during the remainder of his life his sister's family filled his heart as completely and adequately as a family of his own would have done."

Besides the removal of the censorship of the press, the two principal services that he rendered to India, were the "settling of her educational system on a firm and rational basis and the framing of a Penal Code for the Empire." In consequence of his advocacy, the present system of education in the English language was adopted, with such beneficial results as are difficult to estimate. The rich treasury of English literature is thus at the disposal

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of every pupil trained in the government schools of India.

His work on the Penal Code has been described as the most readable and the most literary of all legal digests. "It was not finally enacted till 1860, having in the meantime been carefully revised by another." Of it Mr. Fitzjames Stephen testifies: —

"The draft and the revision are both eminently creditable to their authors; and the result of their successive efforts has been to reproduce in a concise and even beautiful form the spirit of the law of England." This work on the Penal Code, exerting its influence on the now three hundred millions of India, is a sufficient result of his brief study of the law.

Little writing for the *Edinburgh Review* did he do while in India, but the amount of his reading would seem incredible.

"I have cast up my reading account, and brought it to the end of the year 1835. . . . During the last thirteen months I have read Æschylus twice; Sophocles twice; Euripides once; Pindar twice; Callimachus; Apollonius Rhodius; Quintus Calaber; Theocritus twice; Herodotus; Thucydides; almost all Xenophon's works; almost all Plato; Aristotle's *Politics*, and a good deal of his *Organon*, besides dipping elsewhere in him; the whole of Plutarch's *Lives;* about half of Lucian; two or three books of Athenæus; Plautus twice, Terence twice; Lucretius twice; Catullus; Tibullus; Propertius; Lucan; Statius; Silius Italicus; Livy; Velleius Paterculus; Sal-

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lust; Cæsar, and, lastly, Cicero. I have, indeed, a little of Cicero left; but I shall finish him in a few days. I am now deep in Aristophanes and Lucian."

The list is enough to make most professed classical scholars hide their diminished heads.

Though living "more handsomely," he said, "than any other member of the Council," he found that he could lay by money faster than he had expected, and accordingly in 1838, in company with his sister and her family, he sailed for England. During the return voyage he mastered the German language.

His desire, upon returning to England, was to retire to private life and devote himself to the writing of that History of England which had been simmering in his mind. But a sense of duty quite as much as ambition led him to accept a position in the Cabinet, and thus his work on the History was deferred. His contributions to the *Edinburgh Review* were, however, numerous and valuable. And his *Lays of Ancient Rome* were occupying his thought and pen, though not published till 1842.

Toward his History his heart turned as the great task of his remaining years, and he set himself to it with tireless zeal. In 1841, after the downfall of the Melbourne ministry, he wrote: —

"I have at last begun my historical labors; I can hardly say with how much interest and delight. . . . I shall not be satisfied unless I produce something which shall for a few days supersede the last fashionable novel on the tables of young ladies."

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His method of work was most painstaking. As soon as he had finished the rough draught, he began to fill it in at the rate of six foolscap pages a day, or two pages of print. The slowness of this rate was due to the thoroughness of his investigations and his high standards of excellence. "He never allowed a sentence to pass till it was as good as he could make it. He thought little of recasting a chapter in order to obtain a more lucid arrangement, and nothing whatever of reconstructing a paragraph for the sake of one happy stroke or apt illustration." The results justified the labor.

"I remember," says Trevelyan, "the pleasure with which he showed us a communication from one of the readers in Mr. Spottiswoode's office, who respectfully informed him that there was one expression, and one only, throughout the two volumes, of which he did not catch the meaning at a glance."

The first two volumes, published in 1848, met with enthusiastic approval. In his diary he writes: —

"I have reason to be pleased. Of the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, two thousand two hundred and fifty copies were sold in the first year; of *Marmion*, two thousand copies in the first month; of my book three thousand copies in ten days. Black says that there has been no such sale since the days of *Waverley*."

In April, 1849, Messrs. Harper of New York wrote to Macaulay: —

"We have already sold forty thousand copies, and we presume that over sixty thousand copies have been dis-

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posed of. . . . No work, of any kind, has ever so completely taken our whole country by storm."

The third and fourth volumes of the History appeared in 1855, and sold even more largely and rapidly than the first had done. "On the continent of Europe, within six months after the third and fourth volumes appeared, Baron Tauchnitz had sold ten thousand copies; 'which proves,' writes Macaulay, 'that the number of persons who read English in France and Germany is very great.' Six rival translators were engaged at one and the same time in the work of turning the History into German."

Since then it has been translated into the Polish, the Danish, the Swedish, the French, the Italian, the Dutch, the Spanish, the Hungarian, the Russian, the Bohemian, and the Persian languages, and has sold to the extent of at least a million copies. A check for £20,000 is still preserved by the Longmans Publishing Company as a reminder of the largest single payment ever made in a transaction of this kind.

In 1852, as if in recompense for his defeat there fifteen years earlier, he was returned to the House of Commons by the city of Edinburgh. He found the sitting in Parliament a "bore," and he was soon prevented from attendance by heart disease. Compelled to withdraw from all arduous duties, he retired to a villa in Kensington, and there amid his flowers he spent the remainder of his days in his lifelong occupations of reading, writing, and talking.

In 1857 came the offer of a peerage, a well-deserved

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honor, which he gladly accepted under the title of Baron Macaulay of Rothley. "He died as he had always wished to die — without pain; without any formal farewell; preceding to the grave all whom he loved; and leaving behind him a great and honorable name, and the memory of a life every action of which was as clear and transparent as one of his own sentences."

"On the 9th of January, 1860, with impressive pomp, and amid the grief of an entire nation, he was borne to Westminster Abbey and buried in the Poets' Corner at the feet of the statue of Addison, and near the tombs of Johnson and Goldsmith, Garrick, Handel, and Gay."

II. European Politics of the Time

The great popular movement toward political liberty and constitutional government, which reached a climax in the revolt of the American Colonies and in the French Revolution, was experienced also in varying degrees in all European countries. The latter half of the eighteenth century with the earlier half of the nineteenth make a century of political unrest. Aspirations toward "liberty, fraternity, and equality," first expressed by theorizers, became the common property of the people, and afterward became the rallying cries of revolutionists. The work of the French revolutionists was carried to such bloody extremes that a reaction necessarily followed, and the country fell into the hands of Napoleon, who exercised

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power only less autocratic than that of the Bourbons, the former monarchs of France. But at the close of the Napoleonic wars in 1815, the Congress of Vienna, instead of confirming the governmental rearrangements of Napoleon, insisted on a return to the former condition of the boundary lines, and a restoration of the royal families to the thrones from which they had been ousted by Napoleon. The ferment of liberty cannot, however, be permanently repressed by kings or congresses. And the movement toward constitutional government, toward liberty, toward reform, toward unity, began again to show itself. But partly because of the exhaustion from the long years of war, and partly because of a combination of the principal sovereigns of Europe in a league known as the Holy Alliance to maintain their power and to resist reform, these aspirations were, for fifteen years, baffled.

But in 1830, fifteen years after the Congress of Vienna, the overthrow of Charles X was the cause of disturbances and changes in the other countries of the continent. These almost simultaneous uprisings in different nations show how the thoughts and movements of a central and important country like France are powerful to shape the course of events in neighboring governments. In some respects western Europe must be considered as one, sharing in a common movement of thought and political development — a development taking one form here and another form there, but as a whole having the same direction or tendency.

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In Germany the sense of unity and the desire for constitutional government that resulted from the successful resistance to Napoleon were checked by the work of the Holy Alliance.

In France, where the movement against tyranny originated, the desire for liberty was kept alive during the reigns of Louis XVIII and Charles X, the successors of the Bourbons.

In Spain an experiment with a constitutional monarchy was unsuccessful and was followed by a return to the former tyrannical system. This was the time when the Spanish colonies in America asserted their independence. Similar efforts were successfully made in Portugal and Greece, but unsuccessfully in Italy.

This general movement on the continent was experienced also in England. Suggestions for reform in representation and in taxation had been made by Pitt and by the Whigs before the close of the eighteenth century, but the Napoleonic wars absorbed the energies of England for a generation. And it was not till the end of the wars that the subject of reform could be discussed again.

The government of George IV resisted movements toward reform and supported the cause of absolutism abroad. The fear was general that if they yielded to the demand for reform, they would find reform followed by revolution. And the terrors of the French Revolution made the English government unwilling to run the risk of an English revolution.

In 1822, however, Canning, a disciple of the great Pitt,

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became foreign secretary and transferred England, says Guizot, "from the camp of resistance and of European order into the camp of liberty." At length, after the fears of revolution had subsided, and after the fires of war had burned out, the forces of reform drew to a head, gained control, and swept the country. The truly popular government of England dates from the Reform Bill of 1832.

This rapid survey of Europe in the second and third decades of the century reveals a general movement toward reform, popular government, and national unity. All hearts were throbbing with the national pulse, and life was made intense by sharing in the general enthusiasm.

III. Macaulay as a Statesman

In a study of Macaulay's *Essay on Milton* it is necessary to make prominent the literary side of the life of its author. But in order fully to comprehend the literary aspects of his work, a clear understanding of his political achievements must be gained. It might be maintained that Macaulay's chief interest was in politics, and that his writings were tributary to that interest. It is at least certain, that no fair appreciation of the man and of his work can be obtained by ignoring the important part played by Macaulay in the Reform Movement. That the agitation took shape in England as a reform movement and not as a revolution, was due, of course, principally

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to the conservative tendencies of the English people, and largely to the traditions of government by party, which had grown up since the Revolution of 1688, a tradition which put the power of government not in the hands of an irresponsible ruler, but in those of the dominant party. The dominance of a party is not popular government, but it is perhaps as close an approach toward control by the people as they were then ready for. The form of government of the English made a further step toward a complete democracy in 1832, by the passage of the Reform Bill by the Whig party, in which Macaulay had a part.

Macaulay's conversion to Whig principles at Cambridge, through the influence of his friend Charles Austin, has already been alluded to. It brought keen regret to his Tory father, as did some other of his youthful characteristics, but was adhered to steadily throughout his life. It is a striking fact, indeed, that Macaulay's point of view and his chief interests were fixed before he left the University. His intellectual vision was so clear that his opinions were held with conviction. His memory was so tenacious that he seems to have been unable to forget his own youthful positions and his reasons for them. With his adoption of Whig principles we must connect his interest in the subject of his prize essay, — King William III. A careful scrutiny of the subjects of his Essays, his History, his Speeches, and even his Lays will reveal the constant underlying interest in Whig principles, in English history as illustrative of earlier stages of the Reform

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Movement, and in Roman history as furnishing examples of devotion to the commonwealth. Few young men are given so early an opportunity as Macaulay had to support their opinions by public speech and by direct vote on legislative enactments.

"When Macaulay entered public life, the Whigs were looking confidently to an early return to power, and the cry for Parliamentary reform had suddenly revived with a strength it had never before known."

Macaulay's first speech was delivered in April, 1830, on the Removal of Jewish Disabilities.

The dissolution of Parliament in July, upon the death of George IV, was followed by the meeting of the new Parliament in October. The Wellington ministry was succeeded by a Whig Cabinet pledged to the "amelioration of abuses, the promotion of economy, and the endeavor to preserve peace consistently with the honor of the country." The first bill brought in was the famous Reform Bill, which "contained a list of one hundred and ten boroughs condemned to partial or entire disfranchisement." The Bill was introduced on the 1st of March, 1831, and on the evening of the 2d, Macaulay made the first of his Reform speeches." Sir George Trevelyan writes: —

"When he sat down, the Speaker sent for him, and told him that, in all his prolonged experience, he had never seen the House in such a state of excitement. . . . Sir Thomas Denman, who rose later on in the discussion, said, with universal acceptance, that the orator's words

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remained tingling in the ears of all who heard them, and would last in their memories as long as they had memories to employ. . . . 'Portions of the speech,' said Sir Robert Peel, 'were as beautiful as anything I have ever heard or read. It reminded me of the old times.' The names of Fox, Burke, and Canning were during that evening in everybody's mouth."

The impression made by the first speech was confirmed by the two succeeding ones delivered on the same Bill. "Macaulay surpassed his former appearance in closeness, fire, and vigor, and very much improved the effect by a more steady and graceful delivery. It was prodigiously cheered, as it deserved, and, I think, puts him clearly at the head of the great speakers, if not the debaters of the House."

"As for me," writes Macaulay, "I am for the present a sort of lion. My speech has set me in the front rank, if I can keep there; and it has not been my luck hitherto to lose ground when I have once got it."

The radical changes introduced by the Reform Bill made new elections speedily necessary. Macaulay, without giving any preëlection pledges, was elected for Leeds, and took his place in the first reformed Parliament of 1833. Among the reforms promised by the Whig party was that of economy. In fulfilling this promise Macaulay had the honorable opportunity of abolishing the office of Commissioner of Bankruptcy which he himself held. Obliged by this measure of national economy to practice a personal economy, Macaulay, though never in debt,

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was compelled to sell his college medals. This was the situation that made it desirable for personal reasons to accept the offer of a position on the Supreme Council of India.

After his return to England his election to Parliament, in 1839, was followed by his acceptance of an offer of the Secretaryship for War with a seat in the Cabinet. This period did not present so important a crisis in national affairs as that of his first service in Parliament. There was no great cause to call forth his eloquence, and his admirers now regret that he did not sooner retire from public life and devote himself to the writing of his History. It is, therefore, by his distinguished part in the passage of the Reform Bill, and by his lasting services to law and education in India, that his fame as a statesman will be preserved. But the reader of his Essays and of his History will not fail to connect the main subject of his writings with the main subject of his great speeches, — the interests of Whig doctrines and reform.

IV. Macaulay's Mind and Character

Before passing to a brief study of Macaulay's writings, it may be well to make an analysis of his mind and character. "The style is the man," and especially so in the case of a personality so simple and positive as was Macaulay's.

The fundamental characteristic of Macaulay seems to

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have been a peculiar vividness and intensity shown in all his thoughts and feelings. What he saw, he saw distinctly; what he felt, he felt passionately; what he thought, he thought clearly and confidently. This intensity was apparently his to the end of his life. His opinions were always held with conviction and maintained with fervor. His friends were loved with warm affection, and his enemies, few in number, and principally of former times, were hated with a perfect hatred.

As a consequence of this vividness of first impressions, there was an intensity in the act of memory. Instances have been given of his almost infallible power of memory. During the earlier half of his life it was not necessary for him to commit to memory what he wished to retain; he remembered everything that he read with care. It is difficult to exaggerate the power of one who had at his pen point everything that he had read. It made him almost independent of books when writing, and a devourer of books at all other times. A new style of writing history was of course possible to one who carried all the details of personal biography, political parties, and national customs in the reservoir of his memory.

Such a power has also its weakness; it has the faults of its qualities. A man to whom the past is almost as distinct as the present, will hardly be a radical. The memory is an element of conservatism and anchors one to one's past. Is it an error to connect with this truth the fact that Macaulay never changed his opinions, was not what is called a growing man? To the same cause may be traced

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that other and more serious fault in Macaulay; namely, the almost entire absence of reflection. He was constantly reading, or writing, or talking, or reciting, apparently never thinking.

In that deliberate thought which goes by the name of reflection he seems not to have indulged. Conspicuous in his University course was the absence of science and philosophy, and his aversion to mathematics was almost ludicrous. The faults of his education seemed to strengthen his powers instead of supplementing his defects, with the result that he became a great devourer of other men's thoughts, and not a profound thinker. Beneath his Essays and his History there is not a philosophy of life or of history. His thoughts and facts lie pretty near the surface, which is perhaps a reason for their popularity.

Besides this excessive development of memory, there was a moral simplicity, directness and integrity, equally fundamental. There was a rectitude in all his conduct that reminds us of his father, the stern old enemy of the slave trade. There has never been breathed a suspicion of dishonesty in any act of Macaulay's private or public life.

Conscious in himself of such perfect integrity, he quickly formed severe judgments of any others who did not appear to him to show the same integrity. His prejudices, thus conceived were intense and lasting, and were as strong against the characters of history as against his contemporaries.

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These two fundamental characteristics — his intensity and his integrity — made him a unique man and make him a worthy object of study.

V. Macaulay as an Author

An infinite capacity for work was one of the elements of Macaulay's genius. While he was doing a man's work in Parliament, returning to sleep only in the small hours of the morning, he was accustomed to rise and write before breakfast, working under the pressure of the forthcoming number of the *Edinburgh Review*. Much of his essay writing was done in this way, like the novel writing of Scott, before breakfast. Much of his writing resembled that of Scott also in being impromptu, hasty, extemporaneous writing. A still deeper resemblance has been found between these two authors. One has been called the inventor of the historical romance, the other of romantic history. It was Macaulay's avowed purpose to make his history as interesting as a romance, in order that it might displace the latest novel.

The Essays. — Macaulay's Essays have the same sort of merit as his History, for which they may be considered to be preliminary studies. They have been even more popular than the history, probably because the popular mind likes to take its history in small doses, and finds itself indisposed to read a history in five volumes. The Essays were written without thought that they would live

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beyond the month of publication, and they were at first collected and printed against Macaulay's will.

They may be divided into four groups, — the historical, the critical, the controversial, and the biographical. They are, it has been said, a greater body of essays in an essay-writing age than any except the work of Sainte-Beuve.

They show Macaulay's interest in the principles of the Whig party, the dominant interest of his life. Some have a direct bearing on contemporary events, and some only an indirect bearing through the similarity existing between the Puritan and the Whig movements. The best of the essays are perhaps those on Sir William Temple, Clive, Hastings, and Dr. Samuel Johnson.

The essays have unity, freshness, clearness, forcefulness, and such a wealth of illustration as would be possible only to one equipped with Macaulay's memory.

The Lays. — Concerning the *Lays of Ancient Rome* but little need be said. It must be admitted that Macaulay was not a poet of the highest order. But his verses deserve praise. Macaulay was fortunate in finding subjects that gave opportunity for spirited narration, and picturesque treatment. His rhythm and meter are regular and perfect, as is also the structure of his stanzas. The stories uniformly inculcate clearly but not obtrusively the wholesome moral lessons of patriotism and democracy. They are objective rather than subjective in treatment, and are in consequence thoroughly enjoyed by young and old alike.

The Speeches are not often referred to, nor often read,

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but they are among his best work. They are direct, forceful, clear, earnest, and effective. They were recognized by his opponents as presentations of his case so strong that they could not be ignored, as the speeches of some others could be; his speeches had to be met and answered. The best of them is perhaps that on the Reform Bill.

The History. — Macaulay's *History of England* is his *magnum opus*. For many years he looked forward to writing it, and for it he retired from public life.

Macaulay's purpose was to make history popular, and thus to seek an entrance into the common mind for what had been limited to the minds of scholars.

It was a new kind of history that he attempted — picturesque rather than philosophical. He treated a period of history with the fullness of a novel, describing the situations and the characters with minute faithfulness.

The result is a mere fragment, covering in five volumes a period of seventeen years. Twenty-five or thirty volumes would have been needed to treat the period of a hundred years, in accordance with his original plan.

The merits of the History are many and striking. It is always readable, picturesque, and interesting, more so than many a novel. It manifests wonderful sympathy with the past, and power to recreate it imaginatively, and is never intentionally unfair or prejudiced.

On the other hand the criticism may be fairly made that the narrative is sometimes really though unintentionally unfair. The feelings of Macaulay were so intense that he

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could hardly do justice to a person against whom he had conceived a prejudice. It has also been said that the History is an extended political pamphlet, written because of Macaulay's interest in the contemporary political situation. An impartial history would hardly be the product of such a purpose. A final criticism is that the work concentrates disproportionate emphasis on one period of history, and that not very important. As a consequence, the reigns of James II and William III are better known by the reading public than the reigns of any other English monarchs.

Of Macaulay's literary work as a whole it may be repeated, as has often been said, that, while one may find serious fault with the inaccuracy of Macaulay as a historian, he may be credited with having created an appetite for the reading of history more than any other historian has done. That is high and sufficient praise.

VI. Macaulay's Style

In considering Macaulay's style we must think of it as an expression of himself and as intended for a particular audience. His style manifested his own simplicity, lucidity, and forcefulness. It was one which, as we have seen, he possessed in germ in his earliest writings, a style upon which he bestowed infinite care, and which came to have a perfect adaptation to his type of mind and thought. It was adapted also to the popular audience

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which he had in mind. He was not writing primarily for scholars, but for that reading public which must be caught by fascination of subject and charm of manner. Macaulay's desire to be popular was no vulgar or selfish desire, and his success was not earned by any cheap trick of sensationalism.

His vocabulary, to begin with, was simple and untechnical. "He coined no words and used no archaisms." He found it possible to express all he had to say in the current vocabulary of literature. This was, of course, a condition of prime importance for the popular audience which he addressed.

Much has been said about Macaulay's sentences, and he has by some been credited with the invention of the journalistic style of composition. But the systematic use of short sentences was not original with Macaulay as the following quotation will indicate: —

"But in the matter of style Macaulay was little else than an energetic follower of Gibbon; and the following of Gibbon became, through the fine practice of Macaulay, a harmful habit in English prose. Macaulay unfortunately had not the copyright. . . . The style of Mr. Micawber himself was a corrupt following of Gibbon, and the style of the daily paper and the style of the grocer's circular to-day are also a corrupt following of Gibbon. Gibbon was a master, but it was through a second-hand admiration that Gibbon was placed where he eclipsed the past, so that the early eighteenth century and the seventeenth century were neglected for his sake. It was to the

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broad face of astonishment that Gibbon addressed his phrase. The shortened sentence (for it was he and not Macaulay who introduced the frequent full stop, the pause for historical surprise) was Gibbon's."[1]

Newcomer quotes the following as an example of Macaulay's short sentence, the unqualified statement of one thing at a time, "The shore was rocky, the night was black, the wind was furious, the waves of the Bay of Biscay ran high." The same quotation illustrates Macaulay's frequent omissions of connectives, the visible signs of the connections of thought.

As illustrations of Macaulay's frequent use of the antithetical or balanced sentence, Newcomer quotes: "The Puritan had affected formality; the comic poet laughed at decorum. The Puritan had frowned at innocent diversions; the comic poet took under his patronage the most flagitious excesses. The Puritan had canted; the comic poet blasphemed." The pupil, with the foregoing hint, will find constant examples of Macaulay's mannerisms of style.

In paragraph structure Macaulay is exact and systematic. Many paragraphs begin with topic sentences, and after the discussion close with a summary.

The Essays considered as wholes have unity; for though there may be digressions, they do not detract from the desired impression, and the author's return from his digression is clearly indicated.

Macaulay has a tendency to exaggerate, a fault which

[1] Alice Meynell, in the *Atlantic Monthly*, January, 1903.

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is clearly an expression of his own aggressive personality. Lord Melbourne is quoted as having expressed a wish that he could "be as cocksure of anything as Tom Macaulay was of everything." He uses strong words, makes unqualified statements, universal propositions. His use of superlatives was excessive, and he had a trick, as Newcomer indicates, of raising superlatives to the second or third degree, *e.g.*, "What the Italian is to the Englishman, what the Hindoo is to the Italian, what the Bengalee is to other Hindoos, that was Nuncomar to other Bengalees."

Macaulay's concreteness and power of illustration may be mentioned together, for they are both the result of his power of imaginatively constructing a picture of the past, of which his memory supplied him with countless details of the incidents and circumstances.

Such are some of the elements of the famous journalistic style of Macaulay, a style against which one needs to be on one's guard, for it is easier to imitate its faults than its merits.

VII. The Essay on Milton

The *Edinburgh Review*, founded in 1802, had in 1825 reached its highest point of power. Its editor, Jeffrey, was "growing feverish about new writers." In January, 1825, he wrote to a friend in London: "Can you not lay your hands on some clever young man who would write for us? The original supporters of the work are

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getting old, and either too busy or too stupid, and here the young men are mostly Tories." That same year Macaulay's essay on Milton appeared in the August number.

Trevelyan says: "The effect on the author's reputation was instantaneous. Like Lord Byron, he awoke one morning and found himself famous. The beauties of the work were such as all men could recognize, and its very faults pleased. The redundance of youthful enthusiasm, which he himself unsparingly condemns in the preface to his collected essays, seemed graceful enough in the eyes of others. . . . Murray declared that it would be worth the copyright of *Childe Harold* to have Macaulay on the staff of the *Quarterly*. The family breakfast table at Bloomsbury was covered with cards of invitation to dinner from every quarter of London. . . . A warm admirer of Robert Hall, Macaulay heard with pride how the great preacher, then well-nigh worn out with that long disease, his life, was discovered lying on the floor, employed in learning, by aid of grammar and dictionary, enough Italian to enable him to verify the parallel between Milton and Dante. But the compliment that of all others came most nearly home — the only commendation of his literary talent which even in the innermost domestic circle he was ever known to repeat — was the sentence with which Jeffrey acknowledged the receipt of his manuscript, 'The more I think, the less I can conceive where you picked up that style.'"

To Macaulay's later taste the essay seemed "gaudy

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and ungraceful." He says, "It contained scarcely a paragraph such as my matured judgment approved." Its merits, however, are such and so striking that all agree in calling it "an astonishing production for a man of twenty-five."

Macaulay had an inner sympathy with his subject, for he was an enthusiastic Whig, and Whiggism was the manifestation of the spirit of the Puritans adapted to modern circumstances.

In accordance with the uniform method of the *Edinburgh Review* the Essay begins with a notice and criticism of a book recently published, but continues with an independent discussion of the subject in hand. This he treats under two main heads: Milton's writings, and his public life. In the second half occur those fine passages, most frequently quoted, concerning the Puritans and the Cavaliers, parts of which might well be committed to memory.

The effect of this essay on public opinion has been great and good. It has redeemed the name of Milton from the obloquy under which it had rested since the publication of Johnson's malignant *Life of Milton*. What Carlyle has done for Cromwell, that Macaulay did for Milton: he delivered him from the hands of the Tories, and enabled the public to see him apart from the prejudices of controversy and civil war. So we are inclined to think. It is, however, worth considering whether the essay did not rather substitute a Whig prejudice for a Tory one. Was it almost as much of an overestimate as

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Johnson's was an underestimate? Let each student be fully persuaded in his own mind.

VIII. Life and Times of Milton[1]

John Milton, second only to Shakespeare among the masters of English literature, was born in London on the 9th of December, 1608. The house in Bread Street was distinguished, not by number as houses are now, but by the sign of the Black Spread Eagle.

Milton's father, also named John, was a scrivener or a copying lawyer, in which occupation he had prospered for fifteen years. He had been disinherited by his father for having abandoned the Catholic faith.

In his home the boy had every advantage; peace, piety, and comfort reigned there. Though the father regulated his household on Puritan principles, he was yet a man of liberal culture, being a skilled composer of music. From him the son derived his musical ear and his first tuition in music. From the first the father discerned the genius of the son, and found his chief pleasure in fostering it and watching its growth.

Milton's first teacher was a Scotchman, Thomas Young; later he was sent to St. Paul's School — a pub-

[1] This account of the life of Milton is largely an abridgment of David Masson's life of Milton, taken from the *Encyclopædia Britannica.*

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lic grammar school of high celebrity, and within a minute's walk of Bread Street.

According to Aubrey, "He studied very hard and sat up very late, commonly till twelve or one o'clock, and his father ordered the maid to sit up for him; and in these years he composed many verses which might well become a riper age." Milton himself says that when he went to the university he was already "instructed in various tongues," and had "no mean apprehension of the sweetness of philosophy." He was sixteen years old on entering Christ's College, Cambridge, and he spent there the full academic period of seven years necessary for the A.M. degree.

Owing to a certain haughtiness of manner, and an obstinacy in pursuing his own course of study, he was at first not well liked. His college fellows nicknamed him "The Lady," in allusion partly to the delicacy of his personal appearance, and partly to his moral fastidiousness. Soon, however, he won the respect, not only of the college, but also of the whole University. He speaks of "that more than ordinary favor and respect which he found *above any of his equals* at the hands of those courteous and learned men" who were the authorities of his college.

On going to the University, Milton had been destined for the church, but long before the end he had abandoned the purpose. Whoever would become a clergyman at that time must, he said, "subscribe slave, and take an oath withal, which, unless he took with a con-

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science that could not retch, he must strait perjure himself." *On Shakespeare* and *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity* are the two poems of this period to be remembered.

The five years following his leaving college (1632–1637) were spent at Horton, in Buckinghamshire, about twenty miles from London, whither his father had retired in his old age. During these years he read the Greek and Latin writers; doubtless also the Italian, French, and English. This was the period in which he composed *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, the *Arcades*, *Comus*, and *Lycidas*. How small in bulk, but how exquisite in quality! They are the product of Milton's young manhood, still unmodified by the sobering experiences of his public life. The purity of tone in all of them is as perfect as the literary taste. In *Comus* the very theme is the inviolability of virtue; and here, as in *Lycidas*, there are outbreaks of the spirit of the future stern social reformer.

After the death of his mother, in 1637, Milton set out with one servant to make the continental tour. At Paris he was kindly received. He went to Genoa by way of Nice, and thence to Leghorn, Pisa, and Florence. There he remained two months, frequenting the society of artists and men of letters. At Naples he received news of the imminence of civil war, and decided to return. "I thought it dishonorable," he says, "that I should be traveling at my ease for amusement, when my fellow-countrymen at home were fighting for liberty."

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Returning leisurely through Italy and France, he reached England after an absence of a year and three months.

One result of the Italian tour was its effect in stimulating his literary ambition. While in Italy he had shown about, according to the custom, or had recited in literary circles, some of his compositions in Latin and English. These had won him, in return, complimentary letters and copies of verses from the Italian scholars and wits. "I began," he says, "thus far to assent both to them and to divers of my friends here at home, and not less to an inward prompting which now grew daily upon me, that by labor and intent study (which I take to be my portion in this life), joined with the strong propensity of nature, I might perhaps leave something so written to aftertimes as they should not willingly let it die." What the form of his work should be he had not decided, but all plans were interrupted by the civil war. On the first signs of that movement, he consented "to lay aside his singing robes" in order to "embark in a troubled sea of noises and hoarse disputes." For the space of twenty years we see him only as a polemical prose writer, giving and taking blows in the cause of the Revolution.

At first Milton conducted a private school in which, after a peculiar system of his own, he taught his nephews and a few other gentlemen's sons.

The first controversy into which Milton threw himself was that which raged concerning Prelacy, upon which he wrote five pamphlets.

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Milton's marriage to Mary Powell, the daughter of a royalist, was apparently an ill-considered and hasty affair, to be repented at leisure. Being no Minerva, but a simple country girl, "accustomed to dance with king's officers at home," the young wife found her life intolerable, and could see nothing in her husband but a man of harsh and morose ways, whom she could not understand and who was always at his books. She asked leave to return home on a short visit, and then flatly refused to come back. Milton's conduct was most characteristic. He made his case a matter of public argument, and published in quick succession four tracts on the subject of *divorce*. His doctrine is that moral incompatibility is as good a ground for divorce as conjugal infidelity, a doctrine which no civilized society has seen fit to adopt. He seems to treat the question as if it were wholly a man's question, and he expresses notions of the inferiority of women such as he held all his life. The king's waning fortunes made it convenient for his wife's family to bring about a reconciliation.

In 1644 appeared his tract *On Education*, and his noble *Areopagitica*, or *Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing*.

In January, 1649, Charles I was beheaded and England became a commonwealth. At the crisis Milton came forward to justify what the bolder spirits had done and "to compose the minds of the people." Within two weeks after the execution of Charles he published a short pamphlet in defense of the regicides. Because of this

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timely help he was offered the position of Latin Secretary to the Council. He entered upon the duties of this office in 1649, and received a salary of £290 a year.

A series of forty-six letters in Latin, addressed to foreign governments, were edited from his papers after his death. But more important work than this had to be done. The famous *Eikon Basiliké*, which represented Charles as a saint and martyr, was widely circulated. To counteract its influence Milton wrote the *Eikonoklastes*, or *Image-breaker*.

Charles II, then a refugee in Holland, had got Salmasius, a learned professor at the University of Leyden, to write a defense of the cause of his father. Milton was called upon to answer this *Defensio Regia*, which he did by writing his *First Defense for the People of England*. It was rumored that Salmasius died of mortification at his defeat by Milton. The life-long weakness of Milton's eyesight was aggravated by the preparation of this pamphlet, and he soon became totally blind, though his eyes remained as beautiful to outward view as they had always been. The death of his wife in 1652 left him with three daughters, aged seven, five, and one, respectively. These girls, because of the loss of their mother, and because of his notions of the inferiority of women, were not properly educated and became a source of trouble and anxiety to him.

In spite of his blindness, Milton continued in the active discharge of his duties as Latin Secretary during the whole protectorate of Cromwell till the latter's death in 1658.

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His later pamphlets must have been dictated, as also the great poems of his closing period of life.

His second wife, Catherine Woodcock, lived only a year, and her memory was celebrated by a sonnet.

The twenty months that followed the death of Cromwell were occupied by Milton in attempts to maintain republicanism in England, and prevent the restoration of the Stuart family. If one man could have done it, that man was Milton. But his efforts were in vain.

In 1660 Charles II was on the throne and Milton in custody. His more obnoxious writings were called in by proclamation, and publicly burned by the hands of the hangman. Milton's pamphlets, however, though less great than his poetry, will share his immortality.

Milton survived the Restoration fourteen years (1660–1674), the third period of his literary life. The Puritans were out of office and had to cherish their principles in secret till such time as they should reappear in the guise of modern Whiggism and Dissent. Execration of Puritanism and a reaction in favor of whatever Puritanism had forbidden characterized the popular conduct and public procedure.

The literature of this period reflected the national mood and temper, expressing the anti-Puritan spirit, and tending toward the comic and jocose in all forms. The drama of the Restoration attained its height in Dryden, who became poet laureate in 1670.

In 1662 Milton was married for the third time. We have it on her husband's authority that Elizabeth Min-

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shull "was very kind and careful of him," and by the same authority that his daughters were "unkind and undutiful." Milton complained that "they were careless of him being blind, and made nothing of deserting him;" also that "they made way with some of his books, and would have sold the rest to the dunghill woman."

The daughters had been trained by their father to what they thought the irksome work of writing to his dictation, and reading to him in several languages without understanding their meaning. A large and striking painting by Muncaczy, of Milton dictating *Paradise Lost* to his daughters, may be seen in the Lenox Library in New York.

During this closing period Milton found his solace in his own thoughts, in the conversation of a few friends who were proud to lead him out on his daily walks, and also in his books and in continued literary occupations.

Among the works produced in his last period is the volume on the *Christian Doctrines* which furnished the occasion for Macaulay's Essay.

Paradise Lost had been begun in 1658. The greater part of it was composed during the reign of Charles II, and the whole was completed and sold in 1667 for £5 down with a promise of £5 more after the sale of each thirteen hundred copies. Milton and his widow appear to have received £23 from the total sales.

Ellwood, returning the manuscript of *Paradise Lost* to Milton, said, "Thou hast said much here of *Paradise Lost;* but what hast thou to say of *Paradise Found?*"

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was the suggestion for the writing of *Paradise Regained*, which appeared in 1671. In the same year also was published the *Samson Agonistes*, which has a peculiarly personal interest because of the similarity in the circumstances of Milton and Samson in the matter of their blindness and otherwise.

In these later works of Milton we see the same imagination as was manifested in the earlier poems, but it is now the imagination of a mind that had been tried and disciplined by what it had passed through, heavily freighted, as it were, with twenty years of ideas, griefs, experiences, and recollections. It is as if Milton's genius had absorbed and incorporated into its fiber all that we know of the intermediate polemic and prose writer.

In looking for a subject for his masterpiece, Milton had, like Wordsworth, ranged through history, resting for a time on the legends of King Arthur, the subject afterwards chosen by Tennyson. The subject actually chosen was not only great in itself, but especially adapted to the lofty genius of Milton.

The form of the poem is epic; the meter is blank verse; the hero, at least of the first two books, is Satan; the theme is the connection of this world with the larger universe of ante-human existence. Basing his poem on the incidents furnished by the Bible, the poet has passed the whole through his imagination in such a manner that now it is Milton's story of the origin of the universe, rather than the Biblical outline, that has taken possession of the British mind.

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Of a stature somewhat below the average, Milton had, in his youth, been singularly handsome, with a complexion of delicate white and red, dark gray eyes, light auburn hair parted in the middle, and altogether an appearance of slender and even feminine grace.

A visitor once found him "in a small chamber hung with rusty green, sitting in an elbow chair, and dressed neatly in black; pale, but not cadaverous; his hands and fingers gouty, and with chalk stones." Aubrey says, "He was an early riser, to wit, at four o'clock in the morning, yea, after he lost his sight." In winter his hour of rising was five. He had a man read to him as soon as he got up, and also after breakfast, and he always began the day with a chapter or two of the Hebrew Bible. The early part of the day was spent by him in reading and writing; he used to dictate sitting with his leg thrown over the arm of the chair. At one o'clock, after a short walk, he dined, eating well, but drinking little except water. After dinner he used to walk again in the garden, or out in the neighborhood, with some one guiding him. In the afternoon he usually played an hour on the organ or bass viol, either singing himself or making his wife sing. An hour or more towards evening was again given to his books; about six o'clock visitors would drop in, whom he would entertain till eight; then he had olives or something light by way of supper with them; and, after a pipe of tobacco and a glass of water, he went to bed. "Extremely pleasant in conversation, but satirical," says

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Aubrey, who adds that "he was visited by the learned much more than he did desire."

The date of his death was November 8, 1674. The cause was "gout struck in." He was buried beside his father, in the Church of St. Giles, Cripplegate. The widow survived her husband forty-five years. No direct descendants of Milton are now living.

Such was the life and death of the great man for whom, with Macaulay, we may express our veneration.

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ESSAY ON MILTON

Joannis Miltoni, Angli, de Doctrinâ Christianâ libri duo posthumi. A Treatise on Christian Doctrine, compiled from the Holy Scriptures alone. By JOHN MILTON, translated from the Original by Charles R. Sumner, M.A., &c., &c. 1825.

TOWARDS the close of the year 1823, Mr. Lemon, deputy keeper of the state papers, in the course of his researches among the presses of his office, met with a large Latin manuscript. With it were found corrected copies of the foreign despatches written by Milton, while he filled the office of Secretary, and several papers relating to the Popish Trials and the Rye-house Plot. The whole was wrapped up in an envelope, superscribed *To Mr. Skinner, Merchant.* On examination, the large manuscript proved to be the long lost Essay on the Doctrines of Christianity, which, according to Wood and Toland, Milton finished after the Restoration, and deposited with Cyriac Skinner. Skinner, it is well known, held the same political opinions with his illustrious friend. It is therefore probable, as Mr. Lemon conjectures, that he may have fallen under the suspicions of the government during that persecution of the Whigs which

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followed the dissolution of the Oxford parliament, and that, in consequence of a general seizure of his papers, this work may have been brought to the office in which it has been found. But whatever the adventures of the manuscript may have been, no doubt can exist that it is a genuine relic of the great poet.

Mr. Sumner, who was commanded by his Majesty to edit and translate the treatise, has acquitted himself of his task in a manner honourable to his talents and to his character. His version is not indeed very easy or elegant; but it is entitled to the praise of clearness and fidelity. His notes abound with interesting quotations, and have the rare merit of really elucidating the text. The preface is evidently the work of a sensible and candid man, firm in his own religious opinions, and tolerant towards those of others.

The book itself will not add much to the fame of Milton. It is, like all his Latin works, well written, though not exactly in the style of the prize essays of Oxford and Cambridge. There is no elaborate imitation of classical antiquity, no scrupulous purity, none of the ceremonial cleanness which characterises the diction of our academical Pharisees. The author does not attempt to polish and brighten his composition into the Ciceronian gloss and brilliancy. He does not in short sacrifice sense and spirit to pedantic refinements. The nature of his subject compelled him to use many words

"That would have made Quintilian stare and gasp."

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But he writes with as much ease and freedom as if Latin were his mother tongue; and, where he is least happy, his failure seems to arise from the carelessness of a native, not from the ignorance of a foreigner. We may apply to him what Denham with great felicity says of Cowley,

He wears the garb, but not the clothes of the ancients

Throughout the volume are discernible the traces of a powerful and independent mind, emancipated from the influence of authority, and devoted to the search of truth. Milton professes to form his system from the Bible alone; and his digest of Scriptural texts is certainly among the best that have appeared. But he is not always so happy in his inferences as in his citations.

Some of the heterodox doctrines which he avows seem to have excited considerable amazement, particularly his Arianism, and his theory on the subject of polygamy.[1] Yet we can scarcely conceive that any person could have read the *Paradise Lost* without suspecting him of the former; nor do we think that any reader, acquainted with the history of his life, ought to be much startled at the latter. The opinions which he has expressed respecting the nature of the Deity, the eternity of matter, and the observation of the Sabbath, might, we think, have caused more just surprise.

But we will not go into the discussion of these points. The book, were it far more orthodox or far more heretical than it is, would not much edify or corrupt the present generation. The men of our time are not to be con-

[1] That it is inexpedient, but not criminal.

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verted or perverted by quartos. A few more days, and this essay will follow the *Defensio Populi* to the dust and silence of the upper shelf. The name of its author, and the remarkable circumstances attending its publication, will secure to it a certain degree of attention. For a month or two it will occupy a few minutes of chat in every drawing-room, and a few columns in every magazine; and it will then, to borrow the elegant language of the playbills, be withdrawn, to make room for the forthcoming novelties.

We wish however to avail ourselves of the interest, transient as it may be, which this work has excited. The dexterous Capuchins never choose to preach on the life and miracles of a saint, till they have awakened the devotional feelings of their auditors by exhibiting some relic of him, a thread of his garment, a lock of his hair, or a drop of his blood. On the same principle, we intend to take advantage of the late interesting discovery, and, while this memorial of a great and good man is still in the hands of all, to say something of his moral and intellectual qualities. Nor, we are convinced, will the severest of our readers blame us if, on an occasion like the present, we turn for a short time from the topics of the day, to commemorate, in all love and reverence, the genius and virtues of John Milton, the poet, the statesman, the philosopher, the glory of English literature, the champion and the martyr of English liberty.

It is by his poetry that Milton is best known; and it is

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of his poetry that we wish first to speak. By the general suffrage of the civilised world, his place has been assigned among the greatest masters of the art. His detractors, however, though outvoted, have not been silenced. There are many critics, and some of great name, who contrive in the same breath to extol the poems and to decry the poet. The works, they acknowledge, considered in themselves, may be classed among the noblest productions of the human mind. But they will not allow the author to rank with those great men, who, born in the infancy of civilisation, supplied, by their own powers, the want of instruction, and, though destitute of models themselves, bequeathed to posterity models which defy imitation. Milton, it is said, inherited what his predecessors created; he lived in an enlightened age; he received a finished education; and we must therefore, if we would form a just estimate of his powers, make large deductions in consideration of these advantages.

We venture to say, on the contrary, paradoxical as the remark may appear, that no poet has ever had to struggle with more unfavourable circumstances than Milton. He doubted, as he has himself owned, whether he had not been born "an age too late." For this notion Johnson has thought fit to make him the butt of much clumsy ridicule. The poet, we believe, understood the nature of his art better than the critic. He knew that his poetical genius derived no advantage from the civilisation which surrounded him, or from the learning which he had acquired; and he looked back with something

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like regret to the ruder age of simple words and vivid impressions.

We think that, as civilisation advances, poetry almost necessarily declines. Therefore, though we fervently admire those great works of imagination which have appeared in dark ages, we do not admire them the more because they have appeared in dark ages. On the contrary, we hold that the most wonderful and splendid proof of genius is a great poem produced in a civilised age. We cannot understand why those who believe in that most orthodox article of literary faith, that the earliest poets are generally the best, should wonder at the rule as if it were the exception. Surely the uniformity of the phænomenon indicates a corresponding uniformity in the cause.

The fact is, that common observers reason from the progress of the experimental sciences to that of the imitative arts. The improvement of the former is gradual and slow. Ages are spent in collecting materials, ages more in separating and combining them. Even when a system has been formed, there is still something to add, to alter, or to reject. Every generation enjoys the use of a vast hoard bequeathed to it by antiquity, and transmits that hoard, augmented by fresh acquisitions, to future ages. In these pursuits, therefore, the first speculators lie under great disadvantages, and, even when they fail, are entitled to praise. Their pupils, with far inferior intellectual powers, speedily surpass them in actual attainments. Every girl who has read Mrs.

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Marcet's little dialogues on Political Economy could teach Montague or Walpole many lessons in finance. Any intelligent man may now, by resolutely applying himself for a few years to mathematics, learn more than the great Newton knew after half a century of study and meditation.

But it is not thus with music, with painting, or with sculpture. Still less is it thus with poetry. The progress of refinement rarely supplies these arts with better objects of imitation. It may indeed improve the instruments which are necessary to the mechanical operations of the musician, the sculptor, and the painter. But language, the machine of the poet, is best fitted for his purpose in its rudest state. Nations, like individuals, first perceive, and then abstract. They advance from particular images to general terms. Hence the vocabulary of an enlightened society is philosophical, that of a half-civilised people is poetical.

This change in the language of men is partly the cause and partly the effect of a corresponding change in the nature of their intellectual operations, of a change by which science gains and poetry loses. Generalisation is necessary to the advancement of knowledge; but particularity is indispensable to the creations of the imagination. In proportion as men know more and think more, they look less at individuals and more at classes. They therefore make better theories and worse poems. They give us vague phrases instead of images, and personified qualities instead of men. They may be better able to

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analyse human nature than their predecessors. But analysis is not the business of the poet. His office is to portray, not to dissect. He may believe in a moral sense, like Shaftesbury; he may refer all human actions to self-interest, like Helvetius; or he may never think about the matter at all. His creed on such subjects will no more influence his poetry, properly so called, than the notions which a painter may have conceived respecting the lacrymal glands, or the circulation of the blood, will affect the tears of his Niobe, or the blushes of his Aurora. If Shakespeare had written a book on the motives of human actions, it is by no means certain that it would have been a good one. It is extremely improbable that it would have contained half so much able reasoning on the subject as is to be found in the *Fable of the Bees*. But could Mandeville have created an Iago? Well as he knew how to resolve characters into their elements, would he have been able to combine those elements in such a manner as to make up a man, a real, living, individual man? Perhaps no person can be a poet, or can even enjoy poetry, without a certain unsoundness of mind, if any thing which gives so much pleasure ought to be called unsoundness. By poetry we mean not all writing in verse, nor even all good writing in verse. Our definition excludes many metrical compositions which, on other grounds, deserve the highest praise. By poetry we mean the art of employing words in such a manner as to produce an illusion on the imagination, the art of doing by means of words what the painter does by

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means of colours. Thus the greatest of poets[1] has described it, in lines universally admired for the vigour and felicity of their diction, and still more valuable on account of the just notion which they convey of the art in which he excelled :

> "As imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name."

These are the fruits of the "fine frenzy" which he ascribes to the poet, — a fine frenzy doubtless, but still a frenzy. Truth, indeed, is essential to poetry; but it is the truth of madness. The reasonings are just; but the premises are false. After the first suppositions have been made, every thing ought to be consistent; but those first suppositions require a degree of credulity which almost amounts to a partial and temporary derangement of the intellect. Hence of all people children are the most imaginative. They abandon themselves without reserve to every illusion. Every image which is strongly presented to their mental eye produces on them the effect of reality. No man, whatever his sensibility may be, is ever affected by Hamlet or Lear, as a little girl is affected by the story of poor Red Riding-hood. She knows that it is all false, that wolves cannot speak, that there are no wolves in England. Yet in spite of her knowledge she believes; she weeps; she trembles; she dares not go into a dark room lest she should feel the

[1] Shakespeare.

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teeth of the monster at her throat. Such is the despotism of the imagination over uncultivated minds.

In a rude state of society men are children with a greater variety of ideas. It is therefore in such a state of society that we may expect to find the poetical temperament in its highest perfection. In an enlightened age there will be much intelligence, much science, much philosophy, abundance of just classification and subtle analysis, abundance of wit and eloquence, abundance of verses, and even of good ones; but little poetry. Men will judge and compare; but they will not create. They will talk about the old poets, and comment on them, and to a certain degree enjoy them. But they will scarcely be able to conceive the effect which poetry produced on their ruder ancestors, the agony, the ecstasy, the plenitude of belief. The Greek Rhapsodists, according to Plato, could scarce recite Homer without falling into convulsions. The Mohawk hardly feels the scalping knife while he shouts his death-song. The power which the ancient bards of Wales and Germany exercised over their auditors seems to modern readers almost miraculous. Such feelings are very rare in a civilised community, and most rare among those who participate most in its improvements. They linger longest among the peasantry. Poetry produces an illusion on the eye of the mind, as a magic lantern produces an illusion on the eye of the body. And, as the magic lantern acts best in a dark room, poetry effects its purpose most completely in a dark age. As the light of knowledge breaks in upon its

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exhibitions, as the outlines of certainty become more and more definite and the shades of probability more and more distinct, the hues and lineaments of the phantoms which the poet calls up grow fainter and fainter. We cannot unite the incompatible advantages of reality and deception, the clear discernment of truth and the exquisite enjoyment of fiction.

He who, in an enlightened and literary society, aspires to be a great poet, must first become a little child. He must take to pieces the whole web of his mind. He must unlearn much of that knowledge which has perhaps constituted hitherto his chief title to superiority. His very talents will be a hindrance to him. His difficulties will be proportioned to his proficiency in the pursuits which are fashionable among his contemporaries; and that proficiency will in general be proportioned to the vigour and activity of his mind. And it is well if, after all his sacrifices and exertions, his works do not resemble a lisping man or a modern ruin. We have seen in our own time great talents, intense labour, and long meditation, employed in this struggle against the spirit of the age, and employed, we will not say absolutely in vain, but with dubious success and feeble applause.

If these reasonings be just, no poet has ever triumphed over greater difficulties than Milton. He received a learned education: he was a profound and elegant classical scholar: he had studied all the mysteries of Rabbinical literature: he was intimately acquainted with every language of modern Europe, from which either pleasure or

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information was then to be derived. He was perhaps the only great poet of later times who has been distinguished by the excellence of his Latin verse. The genius of Petrarch was scarcely of the first order; and his poems in the ancient language, though much praised by those who have never read them, are wretched compositions. Cowley, with all his admirable wit and ingenuity, had little imagination: nor indeed do we think his classical diction comparable to that of Milton. The authority of Johnson is against us on this point. But Johnson had studied the bad writers of the middle ages till he had become utterly insensible to the Augustan elegance, and was as ill qualified to judge between two Latin styles as an habitual drunkard to set up for a wine-taster.

Versification in a dead language is an exotic, a far-fetched, costly, sickly imitation of that which elsewhere may be found in healthful and spontaneous perfection. The soils on which this rarity flourishes are in general as ill suited to the production of vigorous native poetry as the flower-pots of a hothouse to the growth of oaks. That the author of the *Paradise Lost* should have written the *Epistle to Manso* was truly wonderful. Never before were such marked originality and such exquisite mimicry found together. Indeed in all the Latin poems of Milton the artificial manner indispensable to such works is admirably preserved, while, at the same time, his genius gives to them a peculiar charm, an air of nobleness and freedom, which distinguishes them from all other writings of the same class. They remind us of the amusements

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of those angelic warriors who composed the cohort of Gabriel:

> "About him exercised heroic games
> The unarmed youth of heaven. But o'er their heads
> Celestial armoury, shield, helm, and spear,
> Hung high, with diamond flaming and with gold."

We cannot look upon the sportive exercises for which the genius of Milton ungirds itself, without catching a glimpse of the gorgeous and terrible panoply which it is accustomed to wear. The strength of his imagination triumphed over every obstacle. So intense and ardent was the fire of his mind, that it not only was not suffocated beneath the weight of fuel, but penetrated the whole superincumbent mass with its own heat and radiance.

It is not our intention to attempt any thing like a complete examination of the poetry of Milton. The public has long been agreed as to the merit of the most remarkable passages, the incomparable harmony of the numbers,[1] and the excellence of that style, which no rival has been able to equal, and no parodist to degrade, which displays in their highest perfection the idiomatic powers of the English tongue, and to which every ancient and every modern language has contributed something of grace, of energy, or of music. In the vast field of criticism on which we are entering, innumerable reapers have already put their sickles. Yet the harvest is so abundant

[1] The versification.

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that the negligent search of a straggling gleaner may be rewarded with a sheaf.

The most striking characteristic of the poetry of Milton is the extreme remoteness of the associations by means of which it acts on the reader. Its effect is produced, not so much by what it expresses, as by what it suggests; not so much by the ideas which it directly conveys, as by other ideas which are connected with them. He electrifies the mind through conductors. The most unimaginative man must understand the *Iliad*. Homer gives him no choice, and requires from him no exertion, but takes the whole upon himself, and sets the images in so clear a light, that it is impossible to be blind to them. The works of Milton cannot be comprehended or enjoyed, unless the mind of the reader co-operate with that of the writer. He does not paint a finished picture, or play for a mere passive listener. He sketches, and leaves others to fill up the outline. He strikes the key-note, and expects his hearer to make out the melody.

We often hear of the magical influence of poetry. The expression in general means nothing: but, applied to the writings of Milton, it is most appropriate. His poetry acts like an incantation. Its merit lies less in its obvious meaning than in its occult power. There would seem, at first sight, to be no more in his words than in other words. But they are words of enchantment. No sooner are they pronounced, than the past is present and the distant near. New forms of beauty start at once into existence, and all the burial-places of the memory give

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up their dead. Change the structure of the sentence; substitute one synonyme for another, and the whole effect is destroyed. The spell loses its power; and he who should then hope to conjure with it would find himself as much mistaken as Cassim in the Arabian tale, when he stood crying, "Open Wheat," "Open Barley," to the door which obeyed no sound but "Open Sesame." The miserable failure of Dryden in his attempt to translate into his own diction some parts of the *Paradise Lost*, is a remarkable instance of this.

In support of these observations we may remark, that scarcely any passages in the poems of Milton are more generally known or more frequently repeated than those which are little more than muster-rolls of names. They are not always more appropriate or more melodious than other names. But they are charmed names. Every one of them is the first link in a long chain of associated ideas. Like the dwelling-place of our infancy revisited in manhood, like the song of our country heard in a strange land, they produce upon us an effect wholly independent of their intrinsic value. One transports us back to a remote period of history. Another places us among the novel scenes and manners of a distant region. A third evokes all the dear classical recollections of childhood, the school-room, the dog-eared Virgil, the holiday, and the prize. A fourth brings before us the splendid phantoms of chivalrous romance, the trophied lists, the embroidered housings, the quaint devices, the haunted forests, the enchanted gardens, the achieve-

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ments of enamoured knights, and the smiles of rescued princesses.

In none of the works of Milton is his peculiar manner more happily displayed than in the *Allegro* and the *Penseroso*. It is impossible to conceive that the mechanism of language can be brought to a more exquisite degree of perfection. These poems differ from others, as attar of roses differs from ordinary rose water, the close packed essence from the thin diluted mixture. They are indeed not so much poems, as collections of hints, from each of which the reader is to make out a poem for himself. Every epithet is a text for a stanza.

The *Comus* and the *Samson Agonistes* are works which, though of very different merit, offer some marked points of resemblance. Both are lyric poems in the form of plays. There are perhaps no two kinds of composition so essentially dissimilar as the drama and the ode. The business of the dramatist is to keep himself out of sight, and to let nothing appear but his characters. As soon as he attracts notice to his personal feelings, the illusion is broken. The effect is as unpleasant as that which is produced on the stage by the voice of a prompter or the entrance of a scene-shifter. Hence it was, that the tragedies of Byron were his least successful performances. They resemble those pasteboard pictures invented by the friend of children, Mr. Newbery, in which a single movable head goes round twenty different bodies, so that the same face looks out upon us successively, from the uniform of a hussar, the furs of a judge, and the rags of a

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beggar. In all the characters, patriots and tyrants, haters and lovers, the frown and sneer of Harold were discernible in an instant. But this species of egotism, though fatal to the drama, is the inspiration of the ode. It is the part of the lyric poet to abandon himself, without reserve, to his own emotions.

Between these hostile elements many great men have endeavoured to effect an amalgamation, but never with complete success. The Greek Drama, on the model of which the Samson was framed, sprang from the Ode. The dialogue was ingrafted on the chorus, and naturally partook of its character. The genius of the greatest of the Athenian dramatists co-operated with the circumstances under which tragedy made its first appearance. Æschylus was, head and heart, a lyric poet. In his time, the Greeks had far more intercourse with the East than in the days of Homer; and they had not yet acquired that immense superiority in war, in science, and in the arts, which, in the following generation, led them to treat the Asiatics with contempt. From the narrative of Herodotus it should seem that they still looked up, with the veneration of disciples, to Egypt and Assyria. At this period, accordingly, it was natural that the literature of Greece should be tinctured with the Oriental style. And that style, we think, is discernible in the works of Pindar and Æschylus. The latter often reminds us of the Hebrew writers. The book of Job, indeed, in conduct and diction, bears a considerable resemblance to some of his dramas. Considered as plays, his works are

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absurd; considered as choruses, they are above all praise. If, for instance, we examine the address of Clytæmnestra to Agamemnon on his return, or the description of the seven Argive chiefs, by the principles of dramatic writing, we shall instantly condemn them as monstrous. But if we forget the characters, and think only of the poetry, we shall admit that it has never been surpassed in energy and magnificence. Sophocles made the Greek drama as dramatic as was consistent with its original form. His portraits of men have a sort of similarity; but it is the similarity not of a painting, but of a bas-relief. It suggests a resemblance; but it does not produce an illusion. Euripides attempted to carry the reform further. But it was a task far beyond his powers, perhaps beyond any powers. Instead of correcting what was bad, he destroyed what was excellent. He substituted crutches for stilts, bad sermons for good odes.

Milton, it is well known, admired Euripides highly, much more highly than, in our opinion, Euripides deserved. Indeed the caresses which this partiality leads our countrymen to bestow on "sad Electra's poet," sometimes remind us of the beautiful Queen of Fairy-land kissing the long ears of Bottom. At all events, there can be no doubt that this veneration for the Athenian, whether just or not, was injurious to the *Samson Agonistes*. Had Milton taken Æschylus for his model, he would have given himself up to the lyric inspiration, and poured out profusely all the treasures of his mind, without bestowing a thought on those dramatic proprieties which the nature

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of the work rendered it impossible to preserve. In the attempt to reconcile things in their own nature inconsistent he has failed, as every one else must have failed. We cannot identify ourselves with the characters, as in a good play. We cannot identify ourselves with the poet, as in a good ode. The conflicting ingredients, like an acid and an alkali mixed, neutralise each other. We are by no means insensible to the merits of this celebrated piece, to the severe dignity of the style, the graceful and pathetic solemnity of the opening speech, or the wild and barbaric melody which gives so striking an effect to the choral passages. But we think it, we confess, the least successful effort of the genius of Milton.

The *Comus* is framed on the model of the Italian Masque, as the Samson is framed on the model of the Greek Tragedy. It is certainly the noblest performance of the kind which exists in any language. It is as far superior to the *Faithful Shepherdess*, as the *Faithful Shepherdess* is to the *Aminta*, or the *Aminta* to the *Pastor Fido*. It was well for Milton that he had here no Euripides to mislead him. He understood and loved the literature of modern Italy. But he did not feel for it the same veneration which he entertained for the remains of Athenian and Roman poetry, consecrated by so many lofty and endearing recollections. The faults, moreover, of his Italian predecessors were of a kind to which his mind had a deadly antipathy. He could stoop to a plain style, sometimes even to a bald style; but false brilliancy was his utter aversion. His Muse had no objection to

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a russet attire; but she turned with disgust from the finery of Guarini, as tawdry and as paltry as the rags of a chimney-sweeper on May-Day. Whatever ornaments she wears are of massive gold, not only dazzling to the sight, but capable of standing the severest test of the crucible.

Milton attended in the *Comus* to the distinction which he afterwards neglected in the *Samson*. He made his Masque what it ought to be, essentially lyrical, and dramatic only in semblance. He has not attempted a fruitless struggle against a defect inherent in the nature of that species of composition; and he has therefore succeeded, wherever success was not impossible. The speeches must be read as majestic soliloquies; and he who so reads them will be enraptured with their eloquence, their sublimity, and their music. The interruptions of the dialogue, however, impose a constraint upon the writer, and break the illusion of the reader. The finest passages are those which are lyric in form as well as in spirit. "I should much commend," says the excellent Sir Henry Wotton in a letter to Milton, "the tragical part if the lyrical did not ravish me with a certain Dorique delicacy in your songs and odes, whereunto, I must plainly confess to you, I have seen yet nothing parallel in our language." The criticism was just. It is when Milton escapes from the shackles of the dialogue, when he is discharged from the labour of uniting two incongruous styles, when he is at liberty to indulge his choral raptures without reserve, that he rises even above himself. Then, like his own good Genius bursting

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from the earthly form and weeds of Thyrsis, he stands forth in celestial freedom and beauty; he seems to cry exultingly,

> "Now my task is smoothly done,
> I can fly or I can run,"

to skim the earth, to soar above the clouds, to bathe in the Elysian dew of the rainbow, and to inhale the balmy smells of nard and cassia, which the musky wings of the zephyr scatter through the cedared alleys of the Hesperides.

There are several of the minor poems of Milton on which we would willingly make a few remarks. Still more willingly would we enter into a detailed examination of that admirable poem, the *Paradise Regained*, which, strangely enough, is scarcely ever mentioned except as an instance of the blindness of the parental affection which men of letters bear towards the offspring of their intellects. That Milton was mistaken in preferring this work, excellent as it is, to the *Paradise Lost*, we readily admit. But we are sure that the superiority of the *Paradise Lost* to the *Paradise Regained* is not more decided, than the superiority of the *Paradise Regained* to every poem which has since made its appearance. Our limits, however, prevent us from discussing the point at length. We hasten on to that extraordinary production which the general suffrage of critics has placed in the highest class of human compositions.

The only poem of modern times which can be compared with the *Paradise Lost* is the *Divine Comedy*. The subject of Milton, in some points, resembled that of Dante;

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but he has treated it in a widely different manner. We cannot, we think, better illustrate our opinion respecting our own great poet, than by contrasting him with the father of Tuscan literature.

The poetry of Milton differs from that of Dante, as the hieroglyphics of Egypt differed from the picture-writing of Mexico. The images which Dante employs speak for themselves; they stand simply for what they are. Those of Milton have a signification which is often discernible only to the initiated. Their value depends less on what they directly represent than on what they remotely suggest. However strange, however grotesque, may be the appearance which Dante undertakes to describe, he never shrinks from describing it. He gives us the shape, the colour, the sound, the smell, the taste; he counts the numbers; he measures the size. His similes are the illustrations of a traveller. Unlike those of other poets, and especially of Milton, they are introduced in a plain, business-like manner; not for the sake of any beauty in the objects from which they are drawn; not for the sake of any ornament which they may impart to the poem; but simply in order to make the meaning of the writer as clear to the reader as it is to himself. The ruins of the precipice which led from the sixth to the seventh circle of hell were like those of the rock which fell into the Adige on the south of Trent. The cataract of Phlegethon was like that of Aqua Cheta at the monastery of St. Benedict. The place where the heretics were confined in burning tombs resembled the vast cemetery of Arles.

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Now let us compare with the exact details of Dante the dim intimations of Milton. We will cite a few examples. The English poet has never thought of taking the measure of Satan. He gives us merely a vague idea of vast bulk. In one passage the fiend lies stretched out huge in length, floating many a rood, equal in size to the earth-born enemies of Jove, or to the sea-monster which the mariner mistakes for an island. When he addresses himself to battle against the guardian angels, he stands like Teneriffe or Atlas; his stature reaches the sky. Contrast with these descriptions the lines in which Dante has described the gigantic spectre of Nimrod. "His face seemed to me as long and as broad as the ball of St. Peter's at Rome; and his other limbs were in proportion; so that the bank, which concealed him from the waist downwards, nevertheless showed so much of him that three tall Germans would in vain have attempted to reach his hair." We are sensible that we do no justice to the admirable style of the Florentine poet. But Mr. Cary's translation is not at hand; and our version, however rude, is sufficient to illustrate our meaning.

Once more, compare the lazar-house in the eleventh book of the *Paradise Lost* with the last ward of Malebolge in Dante. Milton avoids the loathsome details, and takes refuge in indistinct but solemn and tremendous imagery. Despair hurrying from couch to couch to mock the wretches with his attendance, Death shaking his dart over them, but, in spite of supplications, delaying to strike. What says Dante? "There was such a moan

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there as there would be if all the sick who, between July and September, are in the hospitals of Valdichiana, and of the Tuscan swamps, and of Sardinia, were in one pit together; and such a stench was issuing forth as is wont to issue from decayed limbs."

We will not take upon ourselves the invidious office of settling precedency between two such writers. Each in his own department is incomparable; and each, we may remark, has wisely, or fortunately, taken a subject adapted to exhibit his peculiar talent to the greatest advantage. The *Divine Comedy* is a personal narrative. Dante is the eye-witness and ear-witness of that which he relates. He is the very man who has heard the tormented spirits crying out for the second death, who has read the dusky characters on the portal within which there is no hope, who has hidden his face from the terrors of the Gorgon, who has fled from the hooks and the seething pitch of Barbariccia and Draghignazzo. His own hands have grasped the shaggy sides of Lucifer.[1] His own feet have climbed the mountain of expiation. His own brow has been marked by the purifying angel. The reader would throw aside such a tale in incredulous disgust, unless it were told with the strongest air of veracity, with a sobriety even in its horrors, with the greatest precision and multiplicity in its details. The narrative of Milton in this respect differs from that of Dante, as the adventures of Amadis differ from those of Gulliver. The author of Amadis would have made his book ridiculous if he had

[1] Satan.

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introduced those minute particulars which give such a charm to the work of Swift, the nautical observations, the affected delicacy about names, the official documents transcribed at full length, and all the unmeaning gossip and scandal of the court, springing out of nothing, and tending to nothing. We are not shocked at being told that a man who lived, nobody knows when, saw many very strange sights, and we can easily abandon ourselves to the illusion of the romance. But when Lemuel Gulliver, surgeon, resident at Rotherhithe, tells of pygmies and giants, flying islands, and philosophising horses, nothing but such circumstantial touches could produce for a single moment a deception on the imagination.

Of all the poets who have introduced into their works the agency of supernatural beings, Milton has succeeded best. Here Dante decidedly yields to him: and as this is a point on which many rash and ill-considered judgments have been pronounced, we feel inclined to dwell on it a little longer. The most fatal error which a poet can possibly commit in the management of his machinery, is that of attempting to philosophise too much. Milton has been often censured for ascribing to spirits many functions of which spirits must be incapable. But these objections, though sanctioned by eminent names, originate, we venture to say, in profound ignorance of the art of poetry.

What is spirit? What are our own minds, the portion of spirit with which we are best acquainted? We observe certain phænomena. We cannot explain them into mate-

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rial causes. We therefore infer that there exists something which is not material. But of this something we have no idea. We can define it only by negatives. We can reason about it only by symbols. We use the word; but we have no image of the thing; and the business of poetry is with images, and not with words. The poet uses words indeed; but they are merely the instruments of his art, not its objects. They are the materials which he is to dispose in such a manner as to present a picture to the mental eye. And if they are not so disposed, they are no more entitled to be called poetry than a bale of canvas and a box of colours to be called a painting.

Logicians may reason about abstractions. But the great mass of men must have images. The strong tendency of the multitude in all ages and nations to idolatry can be explained on no other principle. The first inhabitants of Greece, there is reason to believe, worshipped one invisible Deity. But the necessity of having something more definite to adore, produced, in a few centuries, the innumerable crowd of Gods and Goddesses. In like manner the ancient Persians thought it impious to exhibit the Creator under a human form. Yet even these transferred to the Sun the worship which, in speculation, they considered due only to the Supreme Mind. The history of the Jews is the record of a continued struggle between pure Theism, supported by the most terrible sanctions, and the strangely fascinating desire of having some visible and tangible object of adoration. Perhaps none of the secondary causes which Gibbon has assigned for the

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rapidity with which Christianity spread over the world, while Judaism scarcely ever acquired a proselyte, operated more powerfully than this feeling. God, the uncreated, the incomprehensible, the invisible, attracted few worshippers. A philosopher might admire so noble a conception: but the crowd turned away in disgust from words which presented no image to their minds. It was before Deity embodied in a human form, walking among men, partaking of their infirmities, leaning on their bosoms, weeping over their graves, slumbering in the manger, bleeding on the cross, that the prejudices of the Synagogue, and the doubts of the Academy, and the pride of the Portico, and the fasces of the Lictor, and the swords of thirty legions, were humbled in the dust. Soon after Christianity had achieved its triumph, the principle which had assisted it began to corrupt it. It became a new Paganism. Patron saints assumed the offices of household gods. St. George took the place of Mars. St. Elmo consoled the mariner for the loss of Castor and Pollux. The Virgin Mother and Cecilia succeeded to Venus and the Muses. The fascination of sex and loveliness was again joined to that of celestial dignity; and the homage of chivalry was blended with that of religion. Reformers have often made a stand against these feelings; but never with more than apparent and partial success. The men who demolished the images in cathedrals have not always been able to demolish those which were enshrined in their minds. It would not be difficult to show that in politics the same rule holds good. Doctrines, we are afraid,

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must generally be embodied before they can excite a strong public feeling. The multitude is more easily interested for the most unmeaning badge, or the most insignificant name, than for the most important principle. From these considerations, we infer that no poet, who should affect that metaphysical accuracy for the want of which Milton has been blamed, would escape a disgraceful failure. Still, however, there was another extreme which, though far less dangerous, was also to be avoided. The imaginations of men are in a great measure under the control of their opinions. The most exquisite art of poetical colouring can produce no illusion, when it is employed to represent that which is at once perceived to be incongruous and absurd. Milton wrote in an age of philosophers and theologians. It was necessary, therefore, for him to abstain from giving such a shock to their understandings as might break the charm which it was his object to throw over their imaginations. This is the real explanation of the indistinctness and inconsistency with which he has often been reproached. Dr. Johnson acknowledges that it was absolutely necessary that the spirits should be clothed with material forms. "But," says he, "the poet should have secured the consistency of his system by keeping immateriality out of sight, and seducing the reader to drop it from his thoughts." This is easily said; but what if Milton could not seduce his readers to drop immateriality from their thoughts? What if the contrary opinion had taken so full a possession of the minds of men as to leave no room even for the half

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belief which poetry requires? Such we suspect to have been the case. It was impossible for the poet to adopt altogether the material or the immaterial system. He therefore took his stand on the debatable ground. He left the whole in ambiguity. He has doubtless, by so doing, laid himself open to the charge of inconsistency. But, though philosophically in the wrong, we cannot but believe that he was poetically in the right. This task, which almost any other writer would have found impracticable, was easy to him. The peculiar art which he possessed of communicating his meaning circuitously through a long succession of associated ideas, and of intimating more than he expressed, enabled him to disguise those incongruities which he could not avoid.

Poetry which relates to the beings of another world ought to be at once mysterious and picturesque. That of Milton is so. That of Dante is picturesque indeed beyond any that ever was written. Its effect approaches to that produced by the pencil or the chisel. But it is picturesque to the exclusion of all mystery. This is a fault on the right side, a fault inseparable from the plan of Dante's poem, which, as we have already observed, rendered the utmost accuracy of description necessary. Still it is a fault. The supernatural agents excite an interest; but it is not the interest which is proper to supernatural agents. We feel that we could talk to the ghosts and dæmons, without any emotion of unearthly awe. We could, like Don Juan, ask them to supper, and eat heartily in their company. Dante's angels are good men

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with wings. His devils are spiteful ugly executioners. His dead men are merely living men in strange situations. The scene which passes between the poet and Farinata is justly celebrated. Still, Farinata in the burning tomb is exactly what Farinata would have been at an *auto da fe*. Nothing can be more touching than the first interview of Dante and Beatrice. Yet what is it, but a lovely woman chiding, with sweet austere composure, the lover for whose affection she is grateful, but whose vices she reprobates? The feelings which give the passage its charm would suit the streets of Florence as well as the summit of the Mount of Purgatory.

The spirits of Milton are unlike those of almost all other writers. His fiends, in particular, are wonderful creations. They are not metaphysical abstractions. They are not wicked men. They are not ugly beasts. They have no horns, no tails, none of the fee-faw-fum of Tasso and Klopstock. They have just enough in common with human nature to be intelligible to human beings. Their characters are, like their forms, marked by a certain dim resemblance to those of men, but exaggerated to gigantic dimensions, and veiled in mysterious gloom.

Perhaps the gods and dæmons of Æschylus may best bear a comparison with the angels and devils of Milton. The style of the Athenian had, as we have remarked, something of the Oriental character; and the same peculiarity may be traced in his mythology. It has nothing of the amenity and elegance which we generally find in the superstitions of Greece. All is rugged, barbaric, and

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colossal. The legends of Æschylus seem to harmonise less with the fragrant groves and graceful porticoes in which his countrymen paid their vows to the God of Light and Goddess of Desire, than with those huge and grotesque labyrinths of eternal granite in which Egypt enshrined her mystic Osiris, or in which Hindostan still bows down to her seven-headed idols. His favourite gods are those of the elder generation, the sons of heaven and earth, compared with whom Jupiter himself was a stripling and an upstart, the gigantic Titans, and the inexorable Furies. Foremost among his creations of this class stands Prometheus, half fiend, half redeemer, the friend of man, the sullen and implacable enemy of heaven. Prometheus bears undoubtedly a considerable resemblance to the Satan of Milton. In both we find the same impatience of control, the same ferocity, the same unconquerable pride. In both characters also are mingled, though in very different proportions, some kind and generous feelings. Prometheus, however, is hardly superhuman enough. He talks too much of his chains and his uneasy posture: he is rather too much depressed and agitated. His resolution seems to depend on the knowledge which he possesses that he holds the fate of his torturer in his hands, and that the hour of his release will surely come. But Satan is a creature of another sphere. The might of his intellectual nature is victorious over the extremity of pain. Amidst agonies which cannot be conceived without horror, he deliberates, resolves, and even exults. Against the sword of Michael, against the thunder of

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Jehovah, against the flaming lake, and the marl burning with solid fire, against the prospect of an eternity of unintermitted misery, his spirit bears up unbroken, resting on its own innate energies, requiring no support from any thing external, nor even from hope itself.

To return for a moment to the parallel which we have been attempting to draw between Milton and Dante, we would add that the poetry of these great men has in a considerable degree taken its character from their moral qualities. They are not egotists. They rarely obtrude their idiosyncrasies on their readers. They have nothing in common with those modern beggars for fame, who extort a pittance from the compassion of the inexperienced by exposing the nakedness and sores of their minds. Yet it would be difficult to name two writers whose works have been more completely, though undesignedly, coloured by their personal feelings.

The character of Milton was peculiarly distinguished by loftiness of spirit; that of Dante by intensity of feeling. In every line of the *Divine Comedy* we discern the asperity which is produced by pride struggling with misery. There is perhaps no work in the world so deeply and uniformly sorrowful. The melancholy of Dante was no fantastic caprice. It was not, as far as at this distance of time can be judged, the effect of external circumstances. It was from within. Neither love nor glory, neither the conflicts of earth nor the hope of heaven could dispel it. It turned every consolation and every pleasure into its own nature. It resembled that

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noxious Sardinian soil of which the intense bitterness is said to have been perceptible even in its honey. His mind was, in the noble language of the Hebrew poet,[1] "a land of darkness, as darkness itself, and where the light was as darkness." The gloom of his character discolours all the passions of men, and all the face of nature, and tinges with its own livid hue the flowers of Paradise and the glories of the eternal throne. All the portraits of him are singularly characteristic. No person can look on the features, noble even to ruggedness, the dark furrows of the cheek, the haggard and woful stare of the eye, the sullen and contemptuous curve of the lip, and doubt that they belong to a man too proud and too sensitive to be happy.

Milton was, like Dante, a statesman and a lover; and, like Dante, he had been unfortunate in ambition and in love. He had survived his health and his sight, the comforts of his home, and the prosperity of his party. Of the great men by whom he had been distinguished at his entrance into life, some had been taken away from the evil to come; some had carried into foreign climates their unconquerable hatred of oppression; some were pining in dungeons; and some had poured forth their blood on scaffolds. Venal and licentious scribblers, with just sufficient talent to clothe the thoughts of a pandar in the style of a bellman, were now the favourite writers of the Sovereign and of the public. It was a loathsome herd, which could be compared to nothing so fitly as to

[1] Job x. 22.

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the rabble of Comus, grotesque monsters, half bestial, half human, dropping with wine, bloated with gluttony, and reeling in obscene dances. Amidst these that fair Muse was placed, like the chaste lady of the Masque, lofty, spotless, and serene, to be chattered at, and pointed at, and grinned at, by the whole rout of Satyrs and Goblins. If ever despondency and asperity could be excused in any man, they might have been excused in Milton. But the strength of his mind overcame every calamity. Neither blindness, nor gout, nor age, nor penury, nor domestic afflictions, nor political disappointments, nor abuse, nor proscription, nor neglect, had power to disturb his sedate and majestic patience, His spirits do not seem to have been high, but they were singularly equable. His temper was serious, perhaps stern; but it was a temper which no sufferings could render sullen or fretful. Such as it was when, on the eve of great events, he returned from his travels, in the prime of health and manly beauty, loaded with literary distinctions, and glowing with patriotic hopes, such it continued to be when, after having experienced every calamity which is incident to our nature, old, poor, sightless and disgraced, he retired to his hovel to die.

Hence it was that, though he wrote the *Paradise Lost* at a time of life when images of beauty and tenderness are in general beginning to fade, even from those minds in which they have not been effaced by anxiety and disappointment, he adorned it with all that is most lovely and delightful in the physical and in the moral world.

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Neither Theocritus nor Ariosto had a finer or a more healthful sense of the pleasantness of external objects, or loved better to luxuriate amidst sunbeams and flowers, the songs of nightingales, the juice of summer fruits, and the coolness of shady fountains. His conception of love unites all the voluptuousness of the Oriental harem, and all the gallantry of the chivalric tournament, with all the pure and quiet affection of an English fireside. His poetry reminds us of the miracles of Alpine scenery. Nooks and dells, beautiful as fairy-land, are embosomed in its most rugged and gigantic elevations. The roses and myrtles bloom unchilled on the verge of the avalanche.

Traces, indeed, of the peculiar character of Milton may be found in all his works; but it is most strongly displayed in the Sonnets. Those remarkable poems have been undervalued by critics who have not understood their nature. They have no epigrammatic point. There is none of the ingenuity of Filicaja[1] in the thought, none of the hard and brilliant enamel of Petrarch[1] in the style. They are simple but majestic records of the feelings of the poet; as little tricked out for the public eye as his diary would have been. A victory, an expected attack upon the city, a momentary fit of depression or exultation, a jest thrown out against one of his books, a dream which for a short time restored to him that beautiful face over which the grave had closed for ever, led him to musings which, without effort, shaped themselves into verse. The unity of sentiment and severity of style which characterise these

[1] Italian poets.

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little pieces remind us of the Greek Anthology, or perhaps still more of the Collects of the English Liturgy. The noble poem on the Massacres of Piedmont is strictly a collect in verse.

The sonnets are more or less striking, according as the occasions which gave birth to them are more or less interesting. But they are, almost without exception, dignified by a sobriety and greatness of mind to which we know not where to look for a parallel. It would, indeed, be scarcely safe to draw any decided inferences as to the character of a writer from passages directly egotistical. But the qualities which we have ascribed to Milton, though perhaps most strongly marked in those parts of his works which treat of his personal feelings, are distinguishable in every page, and impart to all his writings, prose and poetry, English, Latin, and Italian, a strong family likeness.

His public conduct was such as was to be expected from a man of a spirit so high and of an intellect so powerful. He lived at one of the most memorable eras in the history of mankind, at the very crisis of the great conflict between Oromasdes and Arimanes, liberty and despotism, reason and prejudice. That great battle was fought for no single generation, for no single land. The destinies of the human race were staked on the same cast with the freedom of the English people. Then were first proclaimed those mighty principles which have since worked their way into the depths of the American forests, which have roused Greece from the slavery and degradation of two thousand years, and which, from one end of Europe to the other, have kindled

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an unquenchable fire in the hearts of the oppressed, and loosed the knees of the oppressors with an unwonted fear.

Of those principles, then struggling for their infant existence, Milton was the most devoted and eloquent literary champion. We need not say how much we admire his public conduct. But we cannot disguise from ourselves that a large portion of his countrymen still think it unjustifiable. The civil war, indeed, has been more discussed, and is less understood, than any event in English history. The friends of liberty laboured under the disadvantage of which the lion in the fable complained so bitterly. Though they were the conquerors, their enemies were the painters. As a body, the Roundheads had done their utmost to decry and ruin literature; and literature was even with them, as, in the long run, it always is with its enemies. The best book on their side of the question is the charming narrative of Mrs. Hutchinson. May's *History of the Parliament* is good; but it breaks off at the most interesting crisis of the struggle. The performance of Ludlow is foolish and violent; and most of the later writers who have espoused the same cause, Oldmixon for instance, and Catherine Macaulay, have, to say the least, been more distinguished by zeal than either by candour or by skill. On the other side are the most authoritative and the most popular historical works in our language, that of Clarendon, and that of Hume. The former is not only ably written and full of valuable information, but has also an air of dignity and sincerity which makes even the prejudices and errors with which it abounds respectable.

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Hume, from whose fascinating narrative the great mass of the reading public are still contented to take their opinions, hated religion so much that he hated liberty for having been allied with religion, and has pleaded the cause of tyranny with the dexterity of an advocate while affecting the impartiality of a judge.

The public conduct of Milton must be approved or condemned according as the resistance of the people to Charles the First shall appear to be justifiable or criminal. We shall therefore make no apology for dedicating a few pages to the discussion of that interesting and most important question. We shall not argue it on general grounds. We shall not recur to those primary principles from which the claim of any government to the obedience of its subjects is to be deduced. We are entitled to that vantage ground; but we will relinquish it. We are, on this point, so confident of superiority, that we are not unwilling to imitate the ostentatious generosity of those ancient knights, who vowed to joust without helmet or shield against all enemies, and to give their antagonists the advantage of sun and wind. We will take the naked constitutional question. We confidently affirm, that every reason which can be urged in favour of the Revolution of 1688 may be urged with at least equal force in favour of what is called the Great Rebellion.

In one respect, only, we think, can the warmest admirers of Charles venture to say that he was a better sovereign than his son.[1] He was not, in name

[1] James II.

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and profession, a Papist; we say in name and profession, because both Charles himself and his creature Laud, while they abjured the innocent badges of popery, retained all its worst vices, a complete subjection of reason to authority, a weak preference of form to substance, a childish passion for mummeries, an idolatrous veneration for the priestly character, and, above all, a merciless intolerance. This, however, we waive. We will concede that Charles was a good Protestant; but we say that his Protestantism does not make the slightest distinction between his case and that of James.

The principles of the Revolution have often been grossly misrepresented, and never more than in the course of the present year. There is a certain class of men, who, while they profess to hold in reverence the great names and great actions of former times, never look at them for any other purpose than in order to find in them some excuse for existing abuses. In every venerable precedent they pass by what is essential, and take only what is accidental: they keep out of sight what is beneficial, and hold up to public imitation all that is defective. If, in any part of any great example, there be any thing unsound, these flesh-flies detect it with an unerring instinct, and dart upon it with a ravenous delight. If some good end has been attained in spite of them, they feel, with their prototype,[1] that

> "Their labour must be to pervert that end,
> And out of good still to find means of evil."

[1] Satan, in *Paradise Lost.*

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To the blessings which England has derived from the Revolution these people are utterly insensible. The expulsion of a tyrant, the solemn recognition of popular rights, liberty, security, toleration, all go for nothing with them. One sect[1] there was, which, from unfortunate temporary causes, it was thought necessary to keep under close restraint. One part[2] of the empire there was so unhappily circumstanced, that at that time its misery was necessary to our happiness, and its slavery to our freedom. These are the parts of the Revolution which the politicians of whom we speak love to contemplate, and which seem to them not indeed to vindicate, but in some degree to palliate, the good which it has produced. Talk to them of Naples, of Spain, or of South America. They stand forth zealots for the doctrine of Divine Right which has now come back to us, like a thief from transportation, under the *alias* of Legitimacy. But mention the miseries of Ireland. Then William is a hero. Then Somers and Shrewsbury are great men. Then the Revolution is a glorious era. The very same persons who, in this country, never omit an opportunity of reviving every wretched Jacobite slander respecting the Whigs of that period, have no sooner crossed St. George's Channel, than they begin to fill their bumpers to the glorious and immortal memory.[3] They may truly boast that they look not at men, but at measures. So that evil be done, they care not who does it; the arbitrary Charles, or the liberal William, Ferdinand the Catholic, or Frederic the Prot-

[1] The Roman Catholics. [2] Ireland. [3] Of William.

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estant. On such occasions their deadliest opponents may reckon upon their candid construction. The bold assertions of these people have of late impressed a large portion of the public with an opinion that James the Second was expelled simply because he was a Catholic, and that the Revolution was essentially a Protestant Revolution.

But this certainly was not the case; nor can any person who has acquired more knowledge of the history of those times than is to be found in Goldsmith's Abridgment believe that, if James had held his own religious opinions without wishing to make proselytes, or if, wishing even to make proselytes, he had contented himself with exerting only his constitutional influence for that purpose, the Prince of Orange would ever have been invited over. Our ancestors, we suppose, knew their own meaning; and, if we may believe them, their hostility was primarily not to popery, but to tyranny. They did not drive out a tyrant because he was a Catholic; but they excluded Catholics from the crown, because they thought them likely to be tyrants. The ground on which they, in their famous resolution, declared the throne vacant, was this, "that James had broken the fundamental laws of the kingdom." Every man, therefore, who approves of the Revolution of 1688 must hold that the breach of fundamental laws on the part of the sovereign justifies resistance. The question, then, is this: Had Charles the First broken the fundamental laws of England?

No person can answer in the negative, unless he refuses

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credit, not merely to all the accusations brought against Charles by his opponents, but to the narratives of the warmest Royalists, and to the confessions of the King himself. If there be any truth in any historian of any party who has related the events of that reign, the conduct of Charles, from his accession to the meeting of the Long Parliament, had been a continued course of oppression and treachery. Let those who applaud the Revolution, and condemn the Rebellion, mention one act of James the Second to which a parallel is not to be found in the history of his father. Let them lay their fingers on a single article in the Declaration of Right, presented by the two Houses to William and Mary, which Charles is not acknowledged to have violated. He had, according to the testimony of his own friends, usurped the functions of the legislature, raised taxes without the consent of parliament, and quartered troops on the people in the most illegal and vexatious manner. Not a single session of parliament had passed without some unconstitutional attack on the freedom of debate; the right of petition was grossly violated; arbitrary judgments, exorbitant fines, and unwarranted imprisonments, were grievances of daily occurrence. If these things do not justify resistance, the Revolution was treason; if they do, the Great Rebellion was laudable.

But, it is said, why not adopt milder measures? Why, after the King had consented to so many reforms, and renounced so many oppressive prerogatives, did the parliament continue to rise in their demands at the risk

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of provoking a civil war? The ship-money had been given up. The Star Chamber had been abolished. Provision had been made for the frequent convocation and secure deliberation of parliaments. Why not pursue an end confessedly good by peaceable and regular means? We recur again to the analogy of the Revolution. Why was James driven from the throne? Why was he not retained upon conditions? He too had offered to call a free parliament and to submit to its decision all the matters in dispute. Yet we are in the habit of praising our forefathers, who preferred a revolution, a disputed succession, a dynasty of strangers, twenty years of foreign and intestine war, a standing army, and a national debt, to the rule, however restricted, of a tried and proved tyrant. The Long Parliament acted on the same principle, and is entitled to the same praise. They could not trust the King. He had no doubt passed salutary laws; but what assurance was there that he would not break them? He had renounced oppressive prerogatives; but where was the security that he would not resume them? The nation had to deal with a man whom no tie could bind, a man who made and broke promises with equal facility, a man whose honour had been a hundred times pawned, and never redeemed.

Here, indeed, the Long Parliament stands on still stronger ground than the Convention of 1688. No action of James can be compared to the conduct of Charles with respect to the Petition of Right. The Lords and Commons present him with a bill in which the con-

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stitutional limits of his power are marked out. He hesitates; he evades; at last he bargains to give his assent for five subsidies. The bill receives his solemn assent; the subsidies are voted; but no sooner is the tyrant relieved, than he returns at once to all the arbitrary measures which he had bound himself to abandon, and violates all the clauses of the very Act which he had been paid to pass.

For more than ten years the people had seen the rights which were theirs by a double claim, by immemorial inheritance and by recent purchase, infringed by the perfidious king who had recognised them. At length circumstances compelled Charles to summon another parliament: another chance was given to our fathers: were they to throw it away as they had thrown away the former? Were they again to be cozened by *le Roi le veut?* Were they again to advance their money on pledges which had been forfeited over and over again? Were they to lay a second Petition of Right at the foot of the throne, to grant another lavish aid in exchange for another unmeaning ceremony, and then to take their departure, till, after ten years more of fraud and oppression, their prince should again require a supply, and again repay it with perjury? They were compelled to choose whether they would trust a tyrant or conquer him. We think that they chose wisely and nobly.

The advocates of Charles, like the advocates of other malefactors against whom overwhelming evidence is produced, generally decline all controversy about the facts,

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and content themselves with calling testimony to character. He had so many private virtues! And had James the Second no private virtues? Was Oliver Cromwell, his bitterest enemies themselves being judges, destitute of private virtues? And what, after all, are the virtues ascribed to Charles? A religious zeal, not more sincere than that of his son, and fully as weak and narrow-minded, and a few of the ordinary household decencies which half the tombstones in England claim for those who lie beneath them. A good father! A good husband! Ample apologies indeed for fifteen years of persecution, tyranny, and falsehood!

We charge him with having broken his coronation oath; and we are told that he kept his marriage vow! We accuse him of having given up his people to the merciless inflictions of the most hot-headed and hard-hearted of prelates,[1] and the defence is, that he took his little son on his knee and kissed him! We censure him for having violated the articles of the Petition of Right, after having, for good and valuable consideration, promised to observe them; and we are informed that he was accustomed to hear prayers at six o'clock in the morning! It is to such considerations as these, together with his Vandyke dress, his handsome face, and his peaked beard, that he owes, we verily believe, most of his popularity with the present generation.

For ourselves, we own that we do not understand the common phrase, a good man, but a bad king. We can

[1] Archbishop Laud.

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as easily conceive a good man and an unnatural father, or a good man and a treacherous friend. We cannot, in estimating the character of an individual, leave out of our consideration his conduct in the most important of all human relations; and if in that relation we find him to have been selfish, cruel, and deceitful, we shall take the liberty to call him a bad man, in spite of all his temperance at table, and all his regularity at chapel.

We cannot refrain from adding a few words respecting a topic on which the defenders of Charles are fond of dwelling. If, they say, he governed his people ill, he at least governed them after the example of his predecessors. If he violated their privileges, it was because those privileges had not been accurately defined. No act of oppression has ever been imputed to him which has not a parallel in the annals of the Tudors. This point Hume has laboured, with an art which is as discreditable in a historical work as it would be admirable in a forensic address. The answer is short, clear, and decisive. Charles had assented to the Petition of Right. He had renounced the oppressive powers said to have been exercised by his predecessors, and he had renounced them for money. He was not entitled to set up his antiquated claims against his own recent release.

These arguments are so obvious, that it may seem superfluous to dwell upon them. But those who have observed how much the events of that time are misrepresented and misunderstood, will not blame us for stating the case

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simply. It is a case of which the simplest statement is the strongest.

The enemies of the Parliament, indeed, rarely choose to take issue on the great points of the question. They content themselves with exposing some of the crimes and follies to which public commotions necessarily give birth. They bewail the unmerited fate of Strafford. They execrate the lawless violence of the army. They laugh at the Scriptural names of the preachers. Major-generals fleecing their districts; soldiers revelling on the spoils of a ruined peasantry; upstarts, enriched by the public plunder, taking possession of the hospitable firesides and hereditary trees of the old gentry; boys smashing the beautiful windows of cathedrals; Quakers riding naked through the market-place; Fifth-monarchy-men shouting for King Jesus; agitators lecturing from the tops of tubs on the fate of Agag; all these, they tell us, were the offspring of the Great Rebellion.

Be it so. We are not careful to answer in this matter. These charges, were they infinitely more important, would not alter our opinion of an event which alone has made us to differ from the slaves who crouch beneath despotic sceptres. Many evils, no doubt, were produced by the civil war. They were the price of our liberty. Has the acquisition been worth the sacrifice? It is the nature of the Devil of tyranny to tear and rend the body which he leaves. Are the miseries of continued possession less horrible than the struggles of the tremendous exorcism?

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If it were possible that a people brought up under an intolerant and arbitrary system could subvert that system without acts of cruelty and folly, half the objections to despotic power would be removed. We should, in that case, be compelled to acknowledge that it at least produces no pernicious effects on the intellectual and moral character of a nation. We deplore the outrages which accompany revolutions. But the more violent the outrages, the more assured we feel that a revolution was necessary. The violence of those outrages will always be proportioned to the ferocity and ignorance of the people; and the ferocity and ignorance of the people will be proportioned to the oppression and degradation under which they have been accustomed to live. Thus it was in our civil war. The heads of the church and state reaped only that which they had sown. The government had prohibited free discussion; it had done its best to keep the people unacquainted with their duties and their rights. The retribution was just and natural. If our rulers suffered from popular ignorance, it was because they had themselves taken away the key of knowledge. If they were assailed with blind fury, it was because they had exacted an equally blind submission.

It is the character of such revolutions that we always see the worst of them at first. Till men have been some time free, they know not how to use their freedom. The natives of wine countries are generally sober. In climates where wine is a rarity intemperance abounds. A newly liberated people may be compared to a northern army

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encamped on the Rhine or the Xeres. It is said that, when soldiers in such a situation first find themselves able to indulge without restraint in such a rare and expensive luxury, nothing is to be seen but intoxication. Soon, however, plenty teaches discretion; and, after wine has been for a few months their daily fare, they become more temperate than they had ever been in their own country. In the same manner, the final and permanent fruits of liberty are wisdom, moderation, and mercy. Its immediate effects are often atrocious crimes, conflicting errors, scepticism on points the most clear, dogmatism on points the most mysterious. It is just at this crisis that its enemies love to exhibit it. They pull down the scaffolding from the half-finished edifice: they point to the flying dust, the falling bricks, the comfortless rooms, the frightful irregularity of the whole appearance; and then ask in scorn where the promised splendour and comfort is to be found. If such miserable sophisms were to prevail there would never be a good house or a good government in the world.

Ariosto tells a pretty story of a fairy, who, by some mysterious law of her nature, was condemned to appear at certain seasons in the form of a foul and poisonous snake. Those who injured her during the period of her disguise were for ever excluded from participation in the blessings which she bestowed. But to those who, in spite of her loathsome aspect, pitied and protected her, she afterwards revealed herself in the beautiful and celestial form which was natural to her,

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accompanied their steps, granted all their wishes, filled their houses with wealth, made them happy in love and victorious in war. Such a spirit is Liberty. At times she takes the form of a hateful reptile. She grovels, she hisses, she stings. But woe to those who in disgust shall venture to crush her! And happy are those who, having dared to receive her in her degraded and frightful shape, shall at length be rewarded by her in the time of her beauty and her glory!

There is only one cure for the evils which newly acquired freedom produces; and that cure is freedom. When a prisoner first leaves his cell he cannot bear the light of day: he is unable to discriminate colours, or recognise faces. But the remedy is, not to remand him into his dungeon, but to accustom him to the rays of the sun. The blaze of truth and liberty may at first dazzle and bewilder nations which have become half blind in the house of bondage. But let them gaze on, and they will soon be able to bear it. In a few years men learn to reason. The extreme violence of opinion subsides. Hostile theories correct each other. The scattered elements of truth cease to contend, and begin to coalesce. And at length a system of justice and order is educed out of the chaos.

Many politicians of our time are in the habit of laying it down as a self-evident proposition, that no people ought to be free till they are fit to use their freedom. The maxim is worthy of the fool in the old story, who resolved not to go into the water till he had learnt to

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swim. If men are to wait for liberty till they become wise and good in slavery, they may indeed wait for ever.

Therefore it is that we decidedly approve of the conduct of Milton and the other wise and good men who, in spite of much that was ridiculous and hateful in the conduct of their associates, stood firmly by the cause of Public Liberty. We are not aware that the poet has been charged with personal participation in any of the blamable excesses of that time. The favourite topic of his enemies is the line of conduct which he pursued with regard to the execution of the King. Of that celebrated proceeding we by no means approve. Still we must say, in justice to the many eminent persons who concurred in it, and in justice more particularly to the eminent person who defended it, that nothing can be more absurd than the imputations which, for the last hundred and sixty years, it has been the fashion to cast upon the Regicides. We have, throughout, abstained from appealing to first principles. We will not appeal to them now. We recur again to the parallel case of the Revolution. What essential distinction can be drawn between the execution of the father and the deposition of the son? What constitutional maxim is there which applies to the former and not to the latter? The King can do no wrong. If so, James was as innocent as Charles could have been. The minister only ought to be responsible for the acts of the Sovereign. If so, why not impeach Jefferies and retain James? The person of a King is sacred. Was the person of James considered sacred at the Boyne? To

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discharge cannon against an army in which a King is known to be posted is to approach pretty near to regicide. Charles, too, it should always be remembered, was put to death by men who had been exasperated by the hostilities of several years, and who had never been bound to him by any other tie than that which was common to them with all their fellow-citizens. Those who drove James from his throne, who seduced his army, who alienated his friends, who first imprisoned him in his palace, and then turned him out of it, who broke in upon his very slumbers by imperious messages, who pursued him with fire and sword from one part of the empire to another, who hanged, drew, and quartered his adherents, and attainted his innocent heir, were his nephew and his two daughters. When we reflect on all these things, we are at a loss to conceive how the same persons who, on the fifth of November,[1] thank God for wonderfully conducting his servant William, and for making all opposition fall before him until he became our King and Governor, can, on the thirtieth of January,[2] contrive to be afraid that the blood of the Royal Martyr may be visited on themselves and their children.

We disapprove, we repeat, of the execution of Charles; not because the constitution exempts the King from responsibility, for we know that all such maxims, however excellent, have their exceptions; not because we feel any peculiar interest in his character, for we think that

[1] The anniversary of William's landing in England.

[2] The anniversary of the execution of Charles I.

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his sentence describes him with perfect justice as "a tyrant, a traitor, a murderer, and a public enemy"; but because we are convinced that the measure was most injurious to the cause of freedom. He whom it removed was a captive and a hostage: his heir,[1] to whom the allegiance of every Royalist was instantly transferred, was at large. The Presbyterians could never have been perfectly reconciled to the father: they had no such rooted enmity to the son. The great body of the people, also, contemplated that proceeding with feelings which, however unreasonable, no government could safely venture to outrage.

But though we think the conduct of the Regicides blamable, that of Milton appears to us in a very different light. The deed was done. It could not be undone. The evil was incurred; and the object was to render it as small as possible. We censure the chiefs of the army for not yielding to the popular opinion; but we cannot censure Milton for wishing to change that opinion. The very feeling which would have restrained us from committing the act would have led us, after it had been committed, to defend it against the ravings of servility and superstition. For the sake of public liberty, we wish that the thing had not been done, while the people disapproved of it. But, for the sake of public liberty, we should also have wished the people to approve of it when it was done. If any thing more were wanting to the justification of Milton, the book of Salmasius would

[1] Charles II.

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furnish it. That miserable performance is now with justice considered only as a beacon to word-catchers, who wish to become statesmen. The celebrity of the man who refuted it, the "Æneæ magni dextra," gives it all its fame with the present generation. In that age the state of things was different. It was not then fully understood how vast an interval separates the mere classical scholar from the political philosopher. Nor can it be doubted that a treatise which, bearing the name of so eminent a critic, attacked the fundamental principles of all free governments, must, if suffered to remain unanswered, have produced a most pernicious effect on the public mind.

We wish to add a few words relative to another subject, on which the enemies of Milton delight to dwell, his conduct during the administration of the Protector. That an enthusiastic votary of liberty should accept office under a military usurper seems, no doubt, at first sight, extraordinary. But all the circumstances in which the country was then placed were extraordinary. The ambition of Oliver was of no vulgar kind. He never seems to have coveted despotic power. He at first fought sincerely and manfully for the Parliament, and never deserted it, till it had deserted its duty. If he dissolved it by force, it was not till he found that the few members who remained after so many deaths, secessions, and expulsions, were desirous to appropriate to themselves a power which they held only in trust, and to inflict upon England the curse of a Venetian oligarchy.[1] But even when thus

[1] A typical aristocracy.

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placed by violence at the head of affairs, he did not assume unlimited power. He gave the country a constitution far more perfect than any which had at that time been known in the world. He reformed the representative system in a manner which has extorted praise even from Lord Clarendon. For himself he demanded indeed the first place in the commonwealth; but with powers scarcely so great as those of a Dutch stadtholder, or an American president. He gave the Parliament a voice in the appointment of ministers, and left to it the whole legislative authority, not even reserving to himself a veto on its enactments; and he did not require that the chief magistracy should be hereditary in his family. Thus far, we think, if the circumstances of the time and the opportunities which he had of aggrandising himself be fairly considered, he will not lose by comparison with Washington or Bolivar. Had his moderation been met by corresponding moderation, there is no reason to think that he would have overstepped the line which he had traced for himself. But when he found that his parliaments questioned the authority under which they met, and that he was in danger of being deprived of the restricted power which was absolutely necessary to his personal safety, then, it must be acknowledged, he adopted a more arbitrary policy.

Yet, though we believe that the intentions of Cromwell were at first honest, though we believe that he was driven from the noble course which he had marked out for himself by the almost irresistible force of circum-

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stances, though we admire, in common with all men of all parties, the ability and energy of his splendid administration, we are not pleading for arbitrary and lawless power, even in his hands. We know that a good constitution is infinitely better than the best despot. But we suspect, that at the time of which we speak, the violence of religious and political enmities rendered a stable and happy settlement next to impossible. The choice lay, not between Cromwell and liberty, but between Cromwell and the Stuarts. That Milton chose well, no man can doubt who fairly compares the events of the protectorate with those of the thirty years which succeeded it, the darkest and most disgraceful in the English annals. Cromwell was evidently laying, though in an irregular manner, the foundations of an admirable system. Never before had religious liberty and the freedom of discussion been enjoyed in a greater degree. Never had the national honour been better upheld abroad, or the seat of justice better filled at home. And it was rarely that any opposition which stopped short of open rebellion provoked the resentment of the liberal and magnanimous usurper. The institutions which he had established, as set down in the Instrument of Government, and the Humble Petition and Advice, were excellent. His practice, it is true, too often departed from the theory of these institutions. But, had he lived a few years longer, it is probable that his institutions would have survived him, and that his arbitrary practice would have died with him. His power had not been consecrated by

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ancient prejudices. It was upheld only by his great personal qualities. Little, therefore, was to be dreaded from a second protector, unless he were also a second Oliver Cromwell. The events which followed his decease are the most complete vindication of those who exerted themselves to uphold his authority. His death dissolved the whole frame of society. The army rose against the parliament, the different corps of the army against each other. Sect raved against sect. Party plotted against party. The Presbyterians, in their eagerness to be revenged on the Independents, sacrificed their own liberty, and deserted all their old principles. Without casting one glance on the past, or requiring one stipulation for the future, they threw down their freedom at the feet of the most frivolous and heartless of tyrants.[1]

Then came those days, never to be recalled without a blush, the days of servitude without loyalty and sensuality without love, of dwarfish talents and gigantic vices, the paradise of cold hearts and narrow minds, the golden age of the coward, the bigot, and the slave. The King cringed to his rival[2] that he might trample on his people, sank into a viceroy of France, and pocketed, with complacent infamy, her degrading insults, and her more degrading gold. The caresses of harlots, and the jests of buffoons, regulated the policy of the state. The government had just ability enough to deceive, and just religion enough to persecute. The principles of liberty were the scoff of every grinning courtier, and the Anathema Maranatha of

[1] Charles II. [2] Louis XIV.

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every fawning dean. In every high place, worship was paid to Charles and James, Belial and Moloch; and England propitiated those obscene and cruel idols with the blood of her best and bravest children. Crime succeeded to crime, and disgrace to disgrace, till the race[1] accursed of God and man was a second time driven forth, to wander on the face of the earth, and to be a by-word and a shaking of the head to the nations.

Most of the remarks which we have hitherto made on the public character of Milton, apply to him only as one of a large body. We shall proceed to notice some of the peculiarities which distinguished him from his contemporaries. And, for that purpose, it is necessary to take a short survey of the parties into which the political world was at that time divided. We must premise, that our observations are intended to apply only to those who adhered, from a sincere preference, to one or to the other side. In days of public commotion, every faction, like an Oriental army, is attended by a crowd of camp-followers, an useless and heartless rabble, who prowl round its line of march in the hope of picking up something under its protection, but desert it in the day of battle, and often join to exterminate it after a defeat. England, at the time of which we are treating, abounded with fickle and selfish politicians, who transferred their support to every government as it rose, who kissed the hand of the King in 1640,[2] and spat in his face in 1649,[3] who shouted with equal glee

[1] The Stuarts. [2] When the Long Parliament began.
[3] When Charles was executed.

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when Cromwell was inaugurated in Westminster Hall, and when he was dug up to be hanged at Tyburn, who dined on calves' heads, or stuck up oak-branches, as circumstances altered, without the slightest shame or repugnance. These we leave out of the account. We take our estimate of parties from those who really deserve to be called partisans.

We would speak first of the Puritans, the most remarkable body of men, perhaps, which the world has ever produced. The odious and ridiculous parts of their character lie on the surface. He that runs may read them; nor have there been wanting attentive and malicious observers to point them out. For many years after the Restoration, they were the theme of unmeasured invective and derision. They were exposed to the utmost licentiousness of the press and of the stage, at the time when the press and the stage were most licentious. They were not men of letters; they were, as a body, unpopular; they could not defend themselves; and the public would not take them under its protection. They were therefore abandoned, without reserve, to the tender mercies of the satirists and dramatists. The ostentatious simplicity of their dress, their sour aspect, their nasal twang, their stiff posture, their long graces, their Hebrew names, the Scriptural phrases which they introduced on every occasion, their contempt of human learning, their detestation of polite amusements, were indeed fair game for the laughers. But it is not from the laughers alone that the philosophy of history is to be learnt. And he who approaches

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this subject should carefully guard against the influence of that potent ridicule which has already misled so many excellent writers.

"Ecco il fonte del riso, ed ecco il rio
Che mortali perigli in se contiene:
Hor qui tener a fren nostro desio,
Ed esser cauti molto a noi conviene."

Those who roused the people to resistance, who directed their measures through a long series of eventful years, who formed, out of the most unpromising materials, the finest army that Europe had ever seen, who trampled down King, Church, and Aristocracy, who, in the short intervals of domestic sedition and rebellion, made the name of England terrible to every nation on the face of the earth, were no vulgar fanatics. Most of their absurdities were mere external badges, like the signs of freemasonry, or the dresses of friars. We regret that these badges were not more attractive. We regret that a body to whose courage and talents mankind has owed inestimable obligations had not the lofty elegance which distinguished some of the adherents of Charles the First, or the easy good-breeding for which the court of Charles the Second was celebrated. But, if we must make our choice, we shall, like Bassanio in the play,[1] turn from the specious caskets which contain only the Death's head and the Fool's head, and fix on the plain leaden chest which conceals the treasure.

[1] *The Merchant of Venice.*

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The Puritans were men whose minds had derived a peculiar character from the daily contemplation of superior beings and eternal interests. Not content with acknowledging, in general terms, an overruling Providence, they habitually ascribed every event to the will of the Great Being, for whose power nothing was too vast, for whose inspection nothing was too minute. To know him, to serve him, to enjoy him, was with them the great end of existence. They rejected with contempt the ceremonious homage which other sects substituted for the pure worship of the soul. Instead of catching occasional glimpses of the Deity through an obscuring veil, they aspired to gaze full on his intolerable brightness, and to commune with him face to face. Hence originated their contempt for terrestrial distinctions. The difference between the greatest and the meanest of mankind seemed to vanish, when compared with the boundless interval which separated the whole race from him on whom their own eyes were constantly fixed. They recognised no title to superiority but his favour; and, confident of that favour, they despised all the accomplishments and all the dignities of the world. If they were unacquainted with the works of philosophers and poets, they were deeply read in the oracles of God. If their names were not found in the registers of heralds, they were recorded in the Book of Life. If their steps were not accompanied by a splendid train of menials, legions of ministering angels had charge over them. Their palaces were houses not made with hands; their

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diadems crowns of glory which should never fade away. On the rich and the eloquent, on nobles and priests, they looked down with contempt: for they esteemed themselves rich in a more precious treasure, and eloquent in a more sublime language, nobles by the right of an earlier creation, and priests by the imposition of a mightier hand. The very meanest of them was a being to whose fate a mysterious and terrible importance belonged, on whose slightest action the spirits of light and darkness looked with anxious interest, who had been destined, before heaven and earth were created, to enjoy a felicity which should continue when heaven and earth should have passed away. Events which short-sighted politicians ascribed to earthly causes, had been ordained on his account. For his sake empires had arisen, and flourished, and decayed. For his sake the Almighty had proclaimed his will by the pen of the Evangelist, and the harp of the prophet. He had been wrested by no common deliverer from the grasp of no common foe. He had been ransomed by the sweat of no vulgar agony, by the blood of no earthly sacrifice. It was for him that the sun had been darkened, that the rocks had been rent, that the dead had risen, that all nature had shuddered at the sufferings of her expiring God.

Thus the Puritan was made up of two different men, the one all self-abasement, penitence, gratitude, passion, the other proud, calm, inflexible, sagacious. He prostrated himself in the dust before his Maker: but he set

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his foot on the neck of his king. In his devotional retirement, he prayed with convulsions, and groans, and tears. He was half-maddened by glorious or terrible illusions. He heard the lyres of angels or the tempting whispers of fiends. He caught a gleam of the Beatific Vision,[1] or woke screaming from dreams of everlasting fire. Like Vane, he thought himself intrusted with the sceptre of the millennial year. Like Fleetwood, he cried in the bitterness of his soul that God had hid his face from him. But when he took his seat in the council, or girt on his sword for war, these tempestuous workings of the soul had left no perceptible trace behind them. People who saw nothing of the godly but their uncouth visages, and heard nothing from them but their groans and their whining hymns, might laugh at them. But those had little reason to laugh who encountered them in the hall of debate or in the field of battle. These fanatics brought to civil and military affairs a coolness of judgment and an immutability of purpose which some writers have thought inconsistent with their religious zeal, but which were in fact the necessary effects of it. The intensity of their feelings on one subject made them tranquil on every other. One overpowering sentiment had subjected to itself pity and hatred, ambition and fear. Death had lost its terrors and pleasure its charms. They had their smiles and their tears, their raptures and their sorrows, but not for the things of this world. Enthusiasm had made them Stoics, had cleared their minds

[1] Of God and Heaven.

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from every vulgar passion and prejudice, and raised them above the influence of danger and of corruption. It sometimes might lead them to pursue unwise ends, but never to choose unwise means. They went through the world, like Sir Artegal's iron man Talus with his flail, crushing and trampling down oppressors, mingling with human beings, but having neither part nor lot in human infirmities, insensible to fatigue, to pleasure, and to pain, not to be pierced by any weapon, not to be withstood by any barrier.

Such we believe to have been the character of the Puritans. We perceive the absurdity of their manners. We dislike the sullen gloom of their domestic habits. We acknowledge that the tone of their minds was often injured by straining after things too high for mortal reach: and we know that, in spite of their hatred of popery, they too often fell into the worst vices of that bad system, intolerance and extravagant austerity, that they had their anchorites, and their crusades, their Dunstans and their De Montforts, their Dominics and their Escobars. Yet, when all circumstances are taken into consideration, we do not hesitate to pronounce them a brave, a wise, an honest, and an useful body.

The Puritans espoused the cause of civil liberty mainly because it was the cause of religion. There was another party, by no means numerous, but distinguished by learning and ability, which acted with them on very different principles. We speak of those whom Cromwell was accustomed to call the Heathens, men who were, in the

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phraseology of that time, doubting Thomases or careless Gallios with regard to religious subjects, but passionate worshippers of freedom. Heated by the study of ancient literature, they set up their country as their idol, and proposed to themselves the heroes of Plutarch as their examples. They seem to have borne some resemblance to the Brissotines of the French Revolution. But it is not very easy to draw the line of distinction between them and their devout associates, whose tone and manner they sometimes found it convenient to affect, and sometimes, it is probable, imperceptibly adopted.

We now come to the Royalists. We shall attempt to speak of them, as we have spoken of their antagonists, with perfect candour. We shall not charge upon a whole party the profligacy and baseness of the horseboys, gamblers and bravoes, whom the hope of license and plunder attracted from all the dens of Whitefriars to the standard of Charles, and who disgraced their associates by excesses which, under the stricter discipline of the Parliamentary armies, were never tolerated. We will select a more favourable specimen. Thinking as we do that the cause of the King was the cause of bigotry and tyranny, we yet cannot refrain from looking with complacency on the character of the honest old Cavaliers. We feel a national pride in comparing them with the instruments which the despots of other countries are compelled to employ, with the mutes who throng their antechambers, and the Janissaries who mount guard at their gates. Our royalist countrymen were not heartless,

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dangling courtiers, bowing at every step, and simpering at every word. They were not mere machines for destruction dressed up in uniforms, caned into skill, intoxicated into valour, defending without love, destroying without hatred. There was a freedom in their subserviency, a nobleness in their very degradation. The sentiment of individual independence was strong within them. They were indeed misled, but by no base or selfish motive. Compassion and romantic honour, the prejudices of childhood, and the venerable names of history, threw over them a spell potent as that of Duessa; and, like the Red-Cross Knight, they thought that they were doing battle for an injured beauty, while they defended a false and loathsome sorceress. In truth they scarcely entered at all into the merits of the political question. It was not for a treacherous king or an intolerant church that they fought, but for the old banner which had waved in so many battles over the heads of their fathers, and for the altars at which they had received the hands of their brides. Though nothing could be more erroneous than their political opinions, they possessed, in a far greater degree than their adversaries, those qualities which are the grace of private life. With many of the vices of the Round Table, they had also many of its virtues, courtesy, generosity, veracity, tenderness, and respect for women. They had far more both of profound and of polite learning than the Puritans. Their manners were more engaging, their tempers more amiable, their tastes more elegant, and their households more cheerful.

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Milton did not strictly belong to any of the classes which we have described. He was not a Puritan. He was not a freethinker. He was not a Royalist. In his character the noblest qualities of every party were combined in harmonious union. From the Parliament and from the Court, from the conventicle and from the Gothic cloister, from the gloomy and sepulchral circles of the Roundheads, and from the Christmas revel of the hospitable Cavalier, his nature selected and drew to itself whatever was great and good, while it rejected all the base and pernicious ingredients by which those finer elements were defiled. Like the Puritans, he lived

"As ever in his great task-master's eye."

Like them, he kept his mind continually fixed on an Almighty Judge and an eternal reward. And hence he acquired their contempt of external circumstances, their fortitude, their tranquillity, their inflexible resolution. But not the coolest sceptic or the most profane scoffer was more perfectly free from the contagion of their frantic delusions, their savage manners, their ludicrous jargon, their scorn of science, and their aversion to pleasure. Hating tyranny with a perfect hatred, he had nevertheless all the estimable and ornamental qualities which were almost entirely monopolised by the party of the tyrant. There was none who had a stronger sense of the value of literature, a finer relish for every elegant amusement, or a more chivalrous delicacy of honour and love. Though his opinions were democratic, his tastes and his associa-

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tions were such as harmonise best with monarchy and aristocracy. He was under the influence of all the feelings by which the gallant Cavaliers were misled. But of those feelings he was the master and not the slave. Like the hero of Homer, he enjoyed all the pleasures of fascination; but he was not fascinated. He listened to the song of the Syrens; yet he glided by without being seduced to their fatal shore.[1] He tasted the cup of Circe; but he bore about him a sure antidote against the effects of its bewitching sweetness.[2] The illusions which captivated his imagination never impaired his reasoning powers. The statesman was proof against the splendour, the solemnity, and the romance which enchanted the poet. Any person who will contrast the sentiments expressed in his treatises on Prelacy with the exquisite lines on ecclesiastical architecture and music in the *Penseroso*, which was published about the same time, will understand our meaning. This is an inconsistency which, more than anything else, raises his character in our estimation, because it shows how many private tastes and feelings he sacrificed, in order to do what he considered his duty to mankind. It is the very struggle of the noble Othello. His heart relents; but his hand is firm. He does nought in hate, but all in honour. He kisses the beautiful deceiver before he destroys her.

That from which the public character of Milton derives its great and peculiar splendour still remains to be men-

[1] Because he had been securely lashed to the mast.

[2] Because he was equipped with moly, a magic herb.

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tioned. If he exerted himself to overthrow a forsworn king and a persecuting hierarchy, he exerted himself in conjunction with others. But the glory of the battle which he fought for the species of freedom which is the most valuable, and which was then the least understood, the freedom of the human mind, is all his own. Thousands and tens of thousands among his contemporaries raised their voices against Ship-money and the Star Chamber. But there were few indeed who discerned the more fearful evils of moral and intellectual slavery, and the benefits which would result from the liberty of the press and the unfettered exercise of private judgment. These were the objects which Milton justly conceived to be the most important. He was desirous that the people should think for themselves as well as tax themselves, and should be emancipated from the dominion of prejudice as well as from that of Charles. He knew that those who, with the best intentions, overlooked these schemes of reform, and contented themselves with pulling down the King and imprisoning the malignants, acted like the heedless brothers in his own poem, who, in their eagerness to disperse the train of the sorcerer, neglected the means of liberating the captive. They thought only of conquering when they should have thought of disenchanting.

> "Oh, ye mistook! Ye should have snatched his wand
> And bound him fast. Without the rod reversed,
> And backward mutters of dissevering power,
> We cannot free the lady that sits here
> Bound in strong fetters fixed and motionless."

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To reverse the rod, to spell the charm backward, to break the ties which bound a stupefied people to the seat of enchantment, was the noble aim of Milton. To this all his public conduct was directed. For this he joined the Presbyterians; for this he forsook them. He fought their perilous battle; but he turned away with disdain from their insolent triumph. He saw that they, like those whom they had vanquished, were hostile to the liberty of thought. He therefore joined the Independents, and called upon Cromwell to break the secular chain, and to save free conscience from the paw of the Presbyterian wolf. With a view to the same great object, he attacked the licensing system, in that sublime treatise which every statesman should wear as a sign upon his hand and as frontlets between his eyes. His attacks were, in general, directed less against particular abuses than against those deeply-seated errors on which almost all abuses are founded, the servile worship of eminent men and the irrational dread of innovation.

That he might shake the foundations of these debasing sentiments more effectually, he always selected for himself the boldest literary services. He never came up in the rear, when the outworks had been carried and the breach entered. He pressed into the forlorn hope. At the beginning of the changes, he wrote with incomparable energy and eloquence against the bishops. But, when his opinion seemed likely to prevail, he passed on to other subjects, and abandoned prelacy to the crowd of writers who now hastened to insult a falling party. There is no

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more hazardous enterprise than that of bearing the torch of truth into those dark and infected recesses in which no light has ever shone. But it was the choice and the pleasure of Milton to penetrate the noisome vapours, and to brave the terrible explosion. Those who most disapprove of his opinions must respect the hardihood with which he maintained them. He, in general, left to others the credit of expounding and defending the popular parts of his religious and political creed. He took his own stand upon those which the great body of his countrymen reprobated as criminal, or derided as paradoxical. He stood up for divorce and regicide. He attacked the prevailing systems of education. His radiant and beneficent career resembled that of the god of light and fertility.[1]

> "Nitor in adversum; nec me, qui cætera, vincit
> Impetus, et rapido contrarius evehor orbi."

It is to be regretted that the prose writings of Milton should, in our time, be so little read. As compositions, they deserve the attention of every man who wishes to become acquainted with the full power of the English language. They abound with passages compared with which the finest declamations of Burke sink into insignificance. They are a perfect field of cloth of gold. The style is stiff with gorgeous embroidery. Not even in the earlier books of the *Paradise Lost* has the great poet ever risen higher than in those parts of his controversial works in which his feelings, excited by conflict, find a vent in

[1] Apollo, the sun-god.

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bursts of devotional and lyric rapture. It is, to borrow his own majestic language, "a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies."

We had intended to look more closely at these performances, to analyze the peculiarities of the diction, to dwell at some length on the sublime wisdom of the Areopagitica and the nervous rhetoric of the Iconoclast, and to point out some of those magnificent passages which occur in the Treatise Reformation, and the Animadversions on the Remonstrant. But the length to which our remarks have already extended renders this impossible.

We must conclude. And yet we can scarcely tear ourselves away from the subject. The days immediately following the publication of this relic of Milton appear to be peculiarly set apart, and consecrated to his memory. And we shall scarcely be censured if, on this his festival, we be found lingering near his shrine, how worthless soever may be the offering which we bring to it. While this book lies on our table, we seem to be contemporaries of the writer. We are transported a hundred and fifty years back. We can almost fancy that we are visiting him in his small lodging; that we see him sitting at the old organ beneath the faded green hangings; that we can catch the quick twinkle of his eyes, rolling in vain to find the day; that we are reading in the lines of his noble countenance the proud and mournful history of his glory and his affliction. We image to ourselves the breathless silence in which we should listen to his slightest word,

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the passionate veneration with which we should kneel to kiss his hand and weep upon it, the earnestness with which we should endeavour to console him, if indeed such a spirit could need consolation, for the neglect of an age unworthy of his talents and his virtues, the eagerness with which we should contest with his daughters, or with his Quaker friend Ellwood, the privilege of reading Homer to him, or of taking down the immortal accents which flowed from his lips.

These are perhaps foolish feelings. Yet we cannot be ashamed of them; nor shall we be sorry if what we have written shall in any degree excite them in other minds. We are not much in the habit of idolising either the living or the dead. And we think that there is no more certain indication of a weak and ill-regulated intellect than that propensity which, for want of a better name, we will venture to christen Boswellism. But there are a few characters which have stood the closest scrutiny and the severest tests, which have been tried in the furnace and proved pure, which have been weighed in the balance and have not been found wanting, which have been declared sterling by the general consent of mankind, and which are visibly stamped with the image and superscription of the Most High. These great men we trust that we know how to prize; and of these was Milton. The sight of his books, the sound of his name, are pleasant to us. His thoughts resemble those celestial fruits and flowers which the Virgin Martyr of Massinger sent down from the gardens of Paradise to the earth, and which

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were distinguished from the productions of other soils, not only by superior bloom and sweetness, but by miraculous efficacy to invigorate and to heal. They are powerful, not only to delight, but to elevate and purify. Nor do we envy the man who can study either the life or the writings of the great poet and patriot, without aspiring to emulate, not indeed the sublime works with which his genius has enriched our literature, but the zeal with which he laboured for the public good, the fortitude with which he endured every private calamity, the lofty disdain with which he looked down on temptations and dangers, the deadly hatred which he bore to bigots and tyrants, and the faith which he so sternly kept with his country and with his fame.

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NOTES

The heavy marginal figures stand for page, and the lighter ones for line.

55 : 6. **Secretary.** As secretary under Cromwell, it was Milton's duty to conduct the foreign diplomatic correspondence in Latin, then the international language.

55 : 12. **Wood and Toland.** Early biographers of Milton.

55 : 15. **Probable.** This conjecture has been found to be incorrect.

56 : 1. **Oxford parliament.** Summoned in that conservative town in the vain hope that it would prove favorable to Charles II in 1681.

56 : 12. **Clearness.** Thus does Macaulay in biblical phrase show his slight regard for a nice precision in imitating the style of the classic authors.

56 : 25. **Ciceronian.** Cicero is considered by many the standard of excellence in Latin prose.

56 : 29. **Quintilian.** A Roman writer on rhetoric in the first century A.D.

57 : 5. **Cowley.** A royalist poet contemporary with Milton, the most popular poet of his day.

57 : 16. **Arianism.** That view of the doctrine of the Trinity in accordance with which the Son is "the highest of created beings."

57 : 22. **Nature of the Deity.** That God must be thought of in human form and with human attributes, but without human defects.

57 : 22. **Eternity of matter.** "Matter is imperishable and eternal because it is not only from God, but out of God," who is eternal.

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59 : 23. **Johnson.** Dr. Samuel Johnson, the great literary authority in the second half of the eighteenth century. He was a personal friend of Goldsmith and Burke.

60 : 3. **Poetry . . . declines.** There is somewhat of truth in Macaulay's observations about the decline of poetry. He was an evolutionist in literature before Darwin. His statement, however, needs modification.

61 : 2. **Montague** or **Walpole.** Charles Montague, Earl of Halifax, in the reigns of William III and Anne, and Sir Robert Walpole, in the reigns of George I and George II, were both careful students of finance.

61 : 5. **Newton.** Sir Isaac Newton, the greatest mathematician of his day, specially famous for the formulation of the Law of Gravitation. Died in 1727.

62 : 4. **Shaftesbury.** A writer on moral philosophy contemporary with Newton.

62 : 5. **Helvetius.** A French writer of a slightly later date.

62 : 16. **Mandeville.** The author of the *Fable of the Bees*, a Dutch physician residing in London. His peculiar teaching was that private luxury, because of its making business for others, is a public benefit.

62 : 26. **Poetry.** Macaulay seems to imply that metrical form is not essential to poetry. What is your opinion?

63 : 16. **Credulity . . . intellect.** This is hardly true of modern poetry, or the modern appreciation of poetry.

64 : 16. **The Greek Rhapsodists.** Professional reciters of poetry, especially of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

64 : 20. **Ancient bards of Wales.** There has recently sprung up a new interest in Welsh bardic literature. Some of the finest elements of English literature are to be traced to that source.

65 : 27. **Rabbinical literature.** Writings of the Jewish rabbis, largely commentaries on the text of the Old Testament.

66 : 4. **Petrarch.** An Italian poet of the fourteenth century.

66 : 7. **Cowley.** See note on page 57, line 5.

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66 : 12. Augustan elegance. The age of the Roman emperor Augustus was characterized by the highest excellence in literature.

66 : 22. Epistle to Manso. Manso, the Neapolitan Marquis of Villa, was kind to Milton, and was rewarded by a beautiful poem in Latin hexameters.

69 : 5. Arabian tale. In the story of *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* in the Arabian Nights.

69 : 8. Dryden. With Milton's permission, Dryden arranged parts of *Paradise Lost* in the form of an opera. After Milton's death Dryden was the greatest poet in England.

71 : 2. Harold. The hero of *Childe Harold*, the most famous of the poems of Byron, a contemporary of Macaulay.

71 : 15. Æschylus. First of the trio of supremely great Greek tragedians of the fifth century B.C.

71 : 21. Herodotus. The "father of history," not as critically exact as later historians.

71 : 26. Pindar. A great writer of odes contemporary with Æschylus.

72 : 8. Sophocles . . . Euripides. Arranged in chronological order, Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides make the trio referred to above.

72 : 21. "Sad Electra's poet." Milton's phrase for Euripides, the author of *Electra*.

72 : 22. Queen of Fairy-land. Titania in *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

72 : 27. Lyric inspiration. In lyric poetry the author pours forth his own impassioned emotions.

72 : 29. Dramatic proprieties. In dramatic poetry the author should put himself into the position of his creation; he must put his own emotions aside, and write consistently with the emotions of his characters.

73 : 18. Faithful Shepherdess . . . Aminta . . . Pastor Fido. Masques, in the form of pastoral dramas.

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74 : 21. **Tragical part.** That is, the dramatic portion, the dialogue.

74 : 22. **Dorique.** The Doric dialect of Greek was the form used by the pastoral poets of Sicily.

75 : 1. **Thyrsis.** The form assumed by the attendant spirit in *Comus*.

75 : 20. **Superiority . . . appearance.** This statement, like the comparison of *Comus* two pages before, is an illustration of Macaulay's power of raising a forceful statement to the second or third degree of intensity.

75 : 28. **Divine Comedy.** Called a comedy because of its happy ending.

76 : 4. **Tuscan.** Tuscany is a province of Italy north of Rome and including Florence, where Dante lived.

77 : 23. **Maleboge.** The eighth circle of hell, in which were confined forgers and falsifiers, counterfeiters and liars.

78 : 27. **Amadis.** The hero of a famous romance of chivalry, called the *Amadis of Gaul*, popular in the Middle Ages.

79 : 9. **Gulliver.** The hero of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.

80 : 17. **Worshipped one invisible Deity.** Quite the contrary is the fact. Monotheism, in Greece as commonly, follows polytheism.

80 : 29. **Gibbon.** The profound historian in the latter part of the eighteenth century, who wrote *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

81 : 12. **Synagogue.** Representing the Jewish Church and nation.

81 : 12. **Academy.** The Platonic school of philosophy down to the time of Cicero met in the Academy, a pleasure ground near Athens.

81 : 13. **Portico.** The place where the Stoic philosophers met.

81 : 13. **Lictor.** The civil power of Rome.

81 : 14. **Legions.** The military power of Rome.

83 : 28. **Don Juan.** The hero of Mozart's opera *Don Juan*, who sups with an animated statue, and is carried off to hell by it.

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84 : 5. **Auto da fe.** A Portuguese phrase for the burning of heretics.

84 : 7. **Beatrice.** The lady of Dante's love and worship. After her death she was idealized by Dante and made to represent his highest aspirations.

85 : 6. **Osiris.** One of the major gods of Egypt.

85 : 10. **Upstart.** Cf. line 30 in *Il Penseroso:* "Whilst yet there was no fear of Jove."

85 : 10. **Titans.** A group of early deities preceding the reign of Zeus.

85 : 11. **Furies.** The avenging deities.

85 : 12. **Prometheus.** One of the Titans, who was represented as the friend of man. Having stolen fire from heaven, he was consequently chained and tortured.

88 : 23. **Hovel.** It has been pointed out that this is an obvious exaggeration of his misfortune.

89 : 6. **Oriental harem.** Another example of Macaulay's exaggeration.

90 : 17. **Public Conduct.** At this point Macaulay passes from the consideration of Milton's writings to his public services.

90 : 21. **Oromasdes and Arimanes.** Two rival deities of the Zoroastrian religion of the ancient Persians. The first was the creator of light, life, and good ; the second, of darkness, death, and evil.

90 : 26. **Principles.** The principles of liberty and self-government whose growth has been traced in the introduction.

91 : 4. **Devoted and eloquent literary champion.** As Macaulay was in his day. It was because of his interest in the progress of liberty and reform that Macaulay wrote on Milton.

91 : 13. **Roundheads.** A contemptuous name for the Puritans because their hair was cut short, unlike the flowing locks of the Cavaliers.

92 : 23. **Revolution of 1688.** By this revolution James II was expelled from the English throne.

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92 : 25. **The Great Rebellion.** The work of the Long Parliament, which reached its climax in the execution of Charles I.

93 : 3. **Laud.** Archbishop of Canterbury, executed by the Long Parliament for treason.

93 : 14. **Certain class of men.** The Tories of Macaulay's day cited the example of William of Orange to support their own opposition to Catholic emancipation.

94 : 14. **Naples . . . Spain . . . South America.** Countries in which the struggle for independence was recent and of current interest.

94 : 15. **Divine Right.** The doctrine that the king derives his right to rule directly from God.

94 : 18. **Somers and Shrewsbury.** Trusted advisers of William.

94 : 22. **Jacobite.** A supporter of James (Jacobus) and his descendants.

94 : 23. **St. George's Channel.** The channel which separates England from Ireland.

94 : 28. **Ferdinand . . . Frederic.** Ferdinand and Frederic were the contemporary monarchs of Spain and Prussia.

95 : 10. **Goldsmith.** The author also of *The Vicar of Wakefield* and *The Deserted Village.*

96 : 12. **Declaration of Right.** To be distinguished from the Petition of Right presented to Charles I.

97 : 1. **Ship-money.** A tax levied by Charles on internal towns as well as on seaports.

97 : 2. **Star Chamber.** So called because of the stars which decorated the room in which it met. It was an arbitrary court of justice, an instrument of injustice.

97 : 28. **Petition of Right.** Distinguish this from the Declaration of Right presented to William.

98 : 16. **Le Roi le veut.** The king wills it: the formula by which the king approved a bill passed by Parliament.

99 : 24. **Vandyke.** A famous Flemish portrait painter, knighted

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and made court painter by Charles I, whom he painted in "handsome dress with long lace collar and cuffs."

100 : 17. **Tudors.** The line of English monarchs preceding the Stuarts.

101 : 7. **Strafford.** The great minister of Charles I, executed for treason by the Long Parliament.

101 : 14. **Quakers.** The Society of Friends originated at the time of the Commonwealth.

101 : 15. **Fifth-monarchy-men.** A small religious sect who believed that Jesus was to set up an earthly kingdom following the four great empires of the prophecy of Daniel, — Assyria, Persia, Greece, and Rome.

101 : 17. **Agag.** An Amalekite king slain by Samuel, and hence a warning to modern tyrants.

103 : 1. **Xeres.** A town in Spain which gives its name to the famous Sherry wines produced near by.

103 : 21. **Ariosto.** An Italian poet of the sixteenth century, author of *Orlando Furioso.*

105 : 18. **Regicides.** Members of the court that condemned Charles I to death.

105 : 19. **First principles.** It is characteristic of Macaulay not to appeal to first principles, but, like a lawyer, to rely upon precedents, or upon parallel cases.

105 : 27. **Jeffries.** The wicked chief justice of James II, noted for "bloody assizes," by which the participants in Monmouth's Rebellion were punished.

105 : 29. **Boyne.** The battle of the Boyne River, in northern Ireland, in which James II was defeated by William.

106 : 15. **Nephew . . . two daughters.** William and Mary, and Anne, who succeeded William on the throne.

107 : 7. **Presbyterians.** One of the two strongest sections of the Puritans; Cromwell belonged to the other section, the Independents.

107 : 28. **Salmasius.** A Dutch professor who wrote a defense of Charles I, to which Milton wrote a reply.

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108 : 4. **Æneæ.** "The right hand of the great Æneas."

108 : 15. **Protector.** Cromwell, at the desire of his army, assumed the title and office of Lord Protector, from 1653 till his death in 1658.

109 : 4. **Reformed the representative system.** A reform which had to be repeated in Macaulay's day.

109 : 8. **Dutch stadtholder.** What we would now call the president of the Dutch Republic.

109 : 17. **Bolivar.** The South American hero, from whom Bolivia was named. He was called "the Liberator," from his success in conducting the struggle for independence.

110 : 23. **Instrument of Government.** A deed, passed in 1653, surrendering power into the hands of Cromwell, and defining his powers and duties.

110 : 24. **Humble Petition and Advice.** A bill, passed in 1657, increasing Cromwell's powers, under which he ruled till his death.

111 : 11. **Independents.** In this country called Congregationalists; they recognize no authority in church government except that of the local church.

111 : 28. **Anathema Maranatha.** A formula of cursing used by St. Paul.

112 : 2. **Belial and Moloch.** Two fiends in Milton's *Paradise Lost;* Belial "graceful and humane" represents Charles II; Moloch, "the fiercest spirit that fought in Heaven," represents James II.

113 : 3. **Calves' heads.** In derision of the fate of Charles.

113 : 3. **Oak-branches.** A reminder of Charles's hiding in an oak after the battle of Worcester.

113 : 8. **Puritans.** This description of the Puritans is justly famous.

114 : 3. **Excellent Writers.** Scott, for example, shows his Tory prejudices in his *Woodstock.*

114 : 4. **Ecco il fonte,** etc. From Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered.*

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"Here is the fountain of mirth: here is the river which in itself contains mortal perils; here now it behooves us to restrain our desire, and in our resolve to be strong."

116: 24. **Expiring god.** Macaulay's style of writing short, balanced, antithetic sentences, is well exemplified above.

117: 7. **Vane.** Sir Henry Vane, at one time governor of Massachusetts, of extreme religious views, was executed after the restoration of Charles II on the charge of treason.

117: 8. **Fleetwood.** A parliamentary general, and son-in-law of Cromwell.

118: 5. **Sir Artegal.** In Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, a Knight impersonating Justice.

118: 20. **Dunstans.** Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury in the tenth century, a man of political as well as churchly power.

118: 20. **De Montforts.** De Montfort was famous for his cruel extermination of the Albigenses in southern France.

118: 20. **Dominics.** Dominic was the founder of the order of the Dominicans, a champion of orthodoxy and preacher of the crusade against the Albigenses.

118: 21. **Escobars.** Escobar was a Spanish Jesuit, the author of the Jesuitical doctrine that the end justifies the means.

119: 2. **Gallios.** Gallio, the Roman governor of the province of Achaia, of whom it was written, "And Gallio cared for none of these things." He has since been a type of the indifferent.

119: 5. **Plutarch.** The author of Plutarch's *Lives* of Greek and Roman heroes.

119: 7. **Brissotines.** Or Girondists, a political party during the French Revolution, "high-minded but unpractical."

119: 17. **Whitefriars.** A district of London, famous as the resort of villains and rascals.

119: 28. **Janissaries.** A former body of Turkish infantry constituting the Sultan's guard and standing army.

120: 11. **Duessa.** False faith, contrasted with Fidessa, true faith, in *The Faerie Queene*.

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120 : 11. **Red Cross Knight.** One of the heroes of *The Faerie Queene*, deceived by Duessa.

120 : 23. **The Round Table.** The circle of Knights who sat around the Round Table of King Arthur.

121 : 6. **Conventicle.** The unadorned and sometimes secret place where the Puritans met for worship.

121 : 7. **Cloister.** The churches of the Royalists were often of Gothic architecture, here contrasted with the conventicle.

122 : 15. **Prelacy.** The government of the church by bishops.

123 : 20. **Malignants.** So the Puritans named the extreme cavaliers.

123 : 21. **Poem.** *Comus.*

124 : 10. **Secular chain.** The State control of the Church.

124 : 13. **Licensing system.** Milton wrote his *Areopagitica* in favor of removing the censorship of the press.

125 : 15. **"Nitor in adversum,"** etc. "I struggle against opposition; nor does the force which conquers other things conquer me, but I am borne against the swift-moving world."

125 : 22. **Burke.** "The greatest prose writer of the eighteenth century."

126 : 2. **A sevenfold . . . symphonies.** Set over against this the critical estimate of Mr. Mark Pattison: "In *Eikonoclastes* Milton is worse than tedious; his reply is in a tone of rude railing and insolent swagger which would have been always unbecoming, but which at this moment was grossly indecent."

126 : 7. **Iconoclast.** An answer to *Eikon Basiliké*, "the portraiture of his sacred Majesty in his solitude and sufferings."

127 : 6. **Daughters . . . privilege.** They might have been glad of relief from what to them appeared drudgery.

127 : 17. **Boswellism.** A word coined from the name of Boswell, the author of the famous *Life of Johnson*, often called the best biography ever written. But Macaulay thought very meanly of Boswell and his unqualified admiration for Johnson.

127 : 28. **Massinger.** An Elizabethan dramatist.

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A CONVERSATION

BETWEEN MR. ABRAHAM COWLEY AND MR. JOHN MILTON TOUCHING THE GREAT CIVIL WAR

SET DOWN BY A GENTLEMAN OF THE MIDDLE TEMPLE

(*Knight's Quarterly Magazine*, *August*, 1824)

"Referre sermones Deorum et
Magna modis tenuare parvis." — HORACE.

I HAVE thought it good to set down in writing a memorable debate, wherein I was a listener, and two men of pregnant parts and great reputation discoursers; hoping that my friends will not be displeased to have a record both of the strange times through which I have lived, and of the famous men with whom I have conversed. It chanced, in the warm and beautiful spring of the year 1665, a little before the saddest summer that ever London saw, that I went to the Bowling Green at Piccadilly, whither, at that time, the best gentry made continual resort. There I met Mr. Cowley, who had lately left Barnelms. There was then a house preparing for him at Chertsey; and, till it should be finished, he had come up for a short time to London, that he might urge a suit to his Grace of Buckingham touching certain lands of her Majesty's, whereof he requested a lease. I had the honor to be familiarly acquainted with that worthy gentleman and most excellent poet, whose death hath been deplored with as general a consent of all Powers that delight in the woods, or in verse, or in love, as was of old that of Daphnis or of Gallus.

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After some talk, which it is not material to set down at large, concerning his suit and his vexations at the court, where indeed his honesty did him more harm than his parts could do him good, I entreated him to dine with me at my lodging in the Temple, which he most courteously promised. And, that so eminent a guest might not lack a better entertainment than cooks or vintners can provide, I sent to the house of Mr. John Milton, in the Artillery-Walk, to beg that he would also be my guest. For, though he had been secretary, first to the Council of State, and, after that, to the Protector, and Mr. Cowley had held the same post under the Lord St. Albans in his banishment, I hoped, notwithstanding, that they would think themselves rather united by their common art than divided by their different factions. And so indeed it proved. For, while we sat at table, they talked freely of many men and things, as well ancient as modern, with much civility. Nay, Mr. Milton, who seldom tasted wine, both because of his singular temperance and because of his gout, did more than once pledge Mr. Cowley, who was indeed no hermit in diet. At last, being heated, Mr. Milton begged that I would open the windows. "Nay," said I, "if you desire fresh air and coolness, what should hinder us, as the evening is fair, from sailing for an hour on the river?" To this they both cheerfully consented; and forth we walked, Mr. Cowley and I leading Mr. Milton between us, to the Temple Stairs. There we took a boat; and thence we were rowed up the river.

The wind was pleasant; the evening fine; the sky, the earth and the water beautiful to look upon. But Mr. Cowley and I held our peace, and said nothing of the gay sights around us, lest we should too feelingly remind Mr. Milton of his calamity; whereof, however, he needed no monitor; for soon he said sadly, "Ah, Mr. Cowley, you are a happy man. What would I now give but for one more look at the sun, and the waters, and the gardens of this fair city!"

"I know not," said Mr. Cowley, "whether we ought not rather to envy you for that which makes you to envy others: and that

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specially in this place, where all eyes which are not closed in blindness ought to become fountains of tears. What can we look upon which is not a memorial of change and sorrow, of fair things vanished, and evil things done? When I see the gate of Whitehall, and the stately pillars of the Banqueting House, I cannot choose but think of what I have there seen in former days, masques, and pageants, and dances, and smiles, and the waving of graceful heads and the bounding of delicate feet. And then I turn to thoughts of other things, which even to remember makes me to blush and weep; — of the great black scaffold, and the axe and block, which were placed before those very windows; and the voice seems to sound in mine ears, the lawless and terrible voice, which cried out that the head of a king was the head of a traitor. There stands Westminster Hall, which who can look upon, and not tremble to think how time, and change, and death confound the councils of the wise, and beat down the weapons of the mighty? How have I seen it surrounded with tens of thousands of petitioners crying for justice and privilege! How have I heard it shake with fierce and proud words, which made the hearts of the people burn within them! Then it is blockaded by dragoons, and cleared by pikemen. And they who have conquered their master go forth trembling at the word of their servant. And yet a little while, and the usurper comes forth from it, in his robe of ermine, with the golden staff in one hand and the Bible in the other, amidst the roaring of the guns and the shouting of the people. And yet again a little while, and the doors are thronged with multitudes in black, and the hearse and the plumes come forth; and the tyrant is borne, in more than royal pomp, to a royal sepulchre. A few days more, and his head is fixed to rot on the pinnacles of that very hall where he sat on a throne in his life, and lay in state after his death. When I think on all these things, to look round me makes me sad at heart. True it is that God hath restored to us our old laws, and the rightful line of our kings. Yet, how I know not, but it seems to me that something is wanting — that our court hath not the old gravity, nor our

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people the old loyalty. These evil times, like the great deluge, have overwhelmed and confused all earthly things. And even as those waters, though at last they abated, yet, as the learned write, destroyed all trace of the garden of Eden, so that its place hath never since been found, so hath this opening of all the flood-gates of political evil effaced all marks of the ancient political paradise."

"Sir, by your favor," said Mr. Milton, "though, from many circumstances both of body and of fortune, I might plead fairer excuses for despondency than yourself, I yet look not so sadly either on the past or on the future. That a deluge hath passed over this our nation, I deny not. But I hold it not to be such a deluge as that of which you speak, but rather a blessed flood, like those of the Nile, which in its overflow, doth indeed wash away ancient landmarks and confound boundaries, and sweep away dwellings, yea, doth give birth to many foul and dangerous reptiles. Yet hence is the fulness of the granary, the beauty of the garden, the nurture of all living things.

"I remember well, Mr. Cowley, what you have said concerning these things in your Discourse of the Government of Oliver Cromwell, which my friend Ellwood read to me last year. Truly, for elegance and rhetoric, that essay is to be compared with the finest tractates of Isocrates and Cicero. But neither that nor any other book, nor any events, which with most men have, more than any book, weight and authority, have altered my opinion, that, of all assemblies that ever were in this world, the best and the most useful was our Long Parliament. I speak not this as wishing to provoke debate; which neither yet do I decline."

Mr. Cowley was, as I could see, a little nettled. Yet, as he was a man of a kind disposition and a most refined courtesy, he put a force upon himself, and answered with more vehemence and quickness indeed than was his wont, yet not uncivilly. "Surely, Mr. Milton, you speak not as you think. I am indeed one of those who believe that God hath reserved to himself the censure of kings, and that their crimes and oppressions are not to be resisted by the hands

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of their subjects. Yet can I easily find excuse for the violence of such as are stung to madness by grievous tyranny. But what shall we say for these men? Which of their just demands was not granted? Which even of their cruel and unreasonable requisitions, so as it were not inconsistent with all law and order, was refused? Had they not sent Strafford to the block and Laud to the Tower? Had they not destroyed the Courts of the High Commission and the Star Chamber? Had they not reversed the proceedings confirmed by the voices of the judges of England, in the matter of ship-money? Had they not taken from the king his ancient and most lawful power touching the order of knighthood? Had they not provided that, after their dissolution, triennial Parliaments should be holden, and that their own power should continue till of their great condescension they should be pleased to resign it themselves? What more could they ask? Was it not enough that they had taken from their king all his oppressive powers, and many that were most salutary? Was is not enough that they had filled his council-board with his enemies, and his prisons with his adherents? Was it not enough that they had raised a furious multitude, to shout and swagger daily under the very windows of his royal palace? Was it not enough that they had taken from him the most blessed prerogative of princely mercy; that, complaining of intolerance themselves, they had denied all toleration to others; that they had urged, against forms, scruples childish as those of any formalist; that they had persecuted the least remnant of the popish rites with the fiercest bitterness of the popish spirit? Must they besides all this have full power to command his armies, and to massacre his friends?

"For military command, it was never known in any monarchy, nay, in any well ordered republic, that it was committed to the debates of a large and unsettled assembly. For their other requisition, that he should give up to their vengeance all who had defended the rights of his crown, his honor must have been ruined if he had complied. Is it not therefore plain that they desired these

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things only in order that, by refusing, his Majesty might give them a pretence for war?

"Men have often risen up against fraud, against cruelty, against rapine. But when before was it known that concessions were met with importunities, graciousness with insults, the open palm of bounty with the clenched fist of malice? Was it like trusty delegates of the Commons of England, and faithful stewards of their liberty and their wealth, to engage them for such causes in civil war, which both to liberty and to wealth is of all things the most hostile? Evil indeed must be the disease which is not more tolerable than such a medicine. Those who, even to save a nation from tyrants, excite it to civil war, do in general but minister to it the same miserable kind of relief wherewith the wizards of Pharaoh mocked the Egyptian. We read that, when Moses had turned their waters into blood, those impious magicians, intending, not benefit to the thirsting people, but vain and emulous ostentation of their own art, did themselves also change into blood the water which the plague had spared. Such sad comfort do those who stir up war minister to the oppressed. But here where was the oppression? What was the favor which had not been granted? What was the evil which had not been removed? What further could they desire?"

"These questions," said Mr. Milton, austerely, "have indeed often deceived the ignorant; but that Mr. Cowley should have been so beguiled, I marvel. You ask what more the Parliament could desire? I will answer you in one word, security. What are votes, and statutes, and resolutions? They have no eyes to see, no hands to strike and avenge. They must have some safeguard from without. Many things, therefore, which in themselves were peradventure hurtful, was this Parliament constrained to ask, lest otherwise good laws and precious rights should be without defence. Nor did they want a great and signal example of this danger. I need not remind you that, many years before, the two Houses had presented to the king the Petition of Right, wherein were set down

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all the most valuable privileges of the people of this realm. Did not Charles accept it? Did he not declare it to be law? Was it not as fully enacted as ever were any of those bills of the Long Parliament concerning which you spoke? And were those privileges therefore enjoyed more fully by the people? No: the king did from that time redouble his oppressions as if to avenge himself for the shame of having been compelled to renounce them. Then were our estates laid under shameful impositions, our houses ransacked, our bodies imprisoned. Then was the steel of the hangman blunted with mangling the ears of harmless men. Then our very minds were fettered, and the iron entered into our souls. Then we were compelled to hide our hatred, our sorrow, and our scorn, to laugh with hidden faces at the mummery of Laud, to curse under our breath the tyranny of Wentworth. Of old time it was well and nobly said, by one of our kings, that an Englishman ought to be free as his thoughts. Our prince reversed the maxim; he strove to make our thoughts as much slaves as ourselves. To sneer at a Romish pageant, to miscall a lord's crest, were crimes for which there was no mercy. These were all the fruits which we gathered from those excellent laws of the former Parliament, from these solemn promises of the king. Were we to be deceived again? Were we again to give subsidies, and receive nothing but promises? Were we again to make wholesome statutes, and then leave them to be broken daily and hourly, until the oppressor should have squandered another supply, and should be ready for another perjury? You ask what they could desire which he had not already granted. Let me ask of you another question. What pledge could he give which he had not already violated? From the first year of his reign, whenever he had need of the purses of his Commons to support the revels of Buckingham or the processions of Laud, he had assured them that, as he was a gentleman and a king, he would sacredly preserve their rights. He had pawned those solemn pledges, and pawned them again and again; but when had he redeemed them? 'Upon my faith,' — 'Upon my sacred word,' —

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'Upon the honor of a prince,' — came so easily from his lips, and dwelt so short a time on his mind, that they were as little to be trusted as the 'By these hilts' of an Alsatian dicer.

"Therefore it is that I praise this Parliament for what else I might have condemned. If what he had granted had been granted graciously and readily, if what he had before promised had been faithfully observed, they could not be defended. It was because he had never yielded the worst abuse without a long struggle, and seldom without a large bribe; it was because he had no sooner disentangled himself from his troubles than he forgot his promises; and, more like a villainous huckster than a great king, kept both the prerogative and the large price which had been paid to him to forego it; it was because of these things that it was necessary and just to bind with forcible restraints one who could be bound neither by law nor honor. Nay, even while he was making those very concessions of which you speak, he betrayed his deadly hatred against the people and their friends. Not only did he, contrary to all that ever was deemed lawful in England, order that members of the Commons' House of Parliament should be impeached of high treason at the bar of the Lords; thereby violating both the trial by jury and the privileges of the House, but, not content with breaking the law by his ministers, he went himself armed to assail it. In the birth-place and sanctuary of freedom, in the House itself, nay, in the very chair of the speaker, placed for the protection of free speech and privilege, he sat, rolling his eyes round the benches, searching for those whose blood he desired, and singling out his opposers to the slaughter. This most foul outrage fails. Then again for the old arts. Then come gracious messages. Then come courteous speeches. Then is again mortgaged his often forfeited honor. He will never again violate the laws. He will respect their rights as if they were his own. He pledges the dignity of his crown; that crown which had been committed to him for the weal of his people, and which he never named, but that he might the more easily delude and oppress them.

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"The power of the sword, I grant you, was not one to be permanently possessed by Parliament. Neither did that Parliament demand it as a permanent possession. They asked it only for temporary security. Nor can I see on what conditions they could safely make peace with that false and wicked king, save such as would deprive him of all power to injure.

"For civil war, that it is an evil I dispute not. But that it is the greatest of evils, that I stoutly deny. It doth indeed appear to the misjudging to be a worse calamity than bad government, because its miseries are collected together within a short space and time, and may easily at one view be taken in and perceived. But the misfortunes of nations ruled by tyrants, being distributed over many centuries and many places, as they are of greater weight and number, so are they of less display. When the Devil of tyranny hath gone into the body politic he departs not but with struggles, and foaming, and great convulsions. Shall he, therefore, vex it forever, lest, in going out, he for a moment tear and rend it? Truly this argument touching the evils of war would better become my friend Ellwood, or some other of the people called Quakers, than a courtier and a cavalier. It applies no more to this war than to all others, as well foreign as domestic, and, in this war, no more to the Houses than to the king; nay, not so much, since he by a little sincerity and moderation might have rendered that needless which their duty to God and man then enforced them to do."

"Pardon me, Mr. Milton," said Mr. Cowley; "I grieve to hear you speak thus of that good king. Most unhappy indeed he was, in that he reigned at a time when the spirit of the then living generation was for freedom, and the precedents of former ages for prerogative. His case was like to that of Christopher Columbus, when he sailed forth on an unknown ocean, and found that the compass, whereby he shaped his course, had shifted from the north pole whereto before it had constantly pointed. So it was with Charles. His compass varied; and therefore he could not tack aright. If he had been an absolute king he would doubtless, like

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Titus Vespasian, have been called the delight of the human race. If he had been a Doge of Venice, or a Stadtholder of Holland, he would never have outstepped the laws. But he lived when our government had neither clear definitions nor strong sanctions. Let, therefore, his faults be ascribed to the time. Of his virtues the praise is his own.

"Never was there a more gracious prince, or a more proper gentleman. In every pleasure he was temperate, in conversation mild and grave, in friendship constant, to his servants liberal, to his queen faithful and loving, in battle brave, in sorrow and captivity resolved, in death most Christian and forgiving.

"For his oppressions, let us look at the former history of this realm. James was never accounted a tyrant. Elizabeth is esteemed to have been the mother of her people. Were they less arbitrary? Did they never lay hands on the purses of their subjects but by Act of Parliament? Did they never confine insolent and disobedient men but in due course of law? Was the court of Star Chamber less active? Were the ears of libellers more safe? I pray you, let not King Charles be thus dealt with. It was enough that in his life he was tried for an alleged breach of laws which none ever heard named till they were discovered for his destruction. Let not his fame be treated as was his sacred and anointed body. Let not his memory be tried by principles found out *ex post facto*. Let us not judge by the spirit of one generation a man whose disposition had been formed by the temper and fashion of another."

"Nay, but conceive me, Mr. Cowley," said Mr. Milton; "inasmuch as, at the beginning of his reign, he imitated those who had governed before him, I blame him not. To expect that kings will, of their own free choice, abridge their prerogative, were argument of but slender wisdom. Whatever, therefore, lawless, unjust, or cruel, he either did or permitted during the first years of his reign, I pass by. But for what was done after that he had solemnly given his consent to the Petition of Right, where shall we find defence? Let it be supposed, which yet I concede not, that the tyranny of his

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father and of Queen Elizabeth had been no less rigorous than was his. But had his father, had that queen, sworn, like him, to abstain from those rigors? Had they, like him, for good and valuable consideration, aliened their hurtful prerogatives? Surely not: from whatever excuse you can plead for him he had wholly excluded himself. The borders of countries, we know, are mostly the seats of perpetual wars and tumults. It was the same with the undefined frontiers, which of old separated privilege and prerogative. They were the debatable land of our polity. It was no marvel if, both on the one side and on the other, inroads were often made. But, when treaties have been concluded, spaces measured, lines drawn, landmarks set up, that which before might pass for innocent error or just reprisal becomes robbery, perjury, deadly sin. He knew not, you say, which of his powers were founded on ancient law, and which only on vicious example. But had he not read the Petition of Right? Had not proclamation been made from his throne: *Soit fait comme il est desiré?*

"For his private virtues they are beside the question. Remember you not," and Mr. Milton smiled, but somewhat sternly, "what Dr. Caius saith in the Merry Wives of Shakspeare? 'What shall the honest man do in my closet? There is no honest man that shall come in my closet.' Even so say I. There is no good man who shall make us his slaves. If he break his word to his people, is it a sufficient defence that he keeps it to his companions? If he oppress and extort all day, shall he be held blameless because he prayeth at night and morning? If he be insatiable in plunder and revenge, shall we pass it by because in meat and drink he is temperate? If he have lived like a tyrant, shall all be forgotten because he hath died like a martyr?

"He was a man, as I think, who had so much semblance of virtues as might make his vices most dangerous. He was not a tyrant after our wonted English model. The second Richard, the second and fourth Edwards, and the eighth Harry, were men profuse, gay, boisterous; lovers of women and of wine, of no outward

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sanctity or gravity. Charles was a ruler after the Italian fashion; grave, demure, of a solemn carriage, and a sober diet; as constant at prayers as a priest, as heedless of oaths as an atheist."

Mr. Cowley answered somewhat sharply: "I am sorry, sir, to hear you speak thus. I had hoped that the vehemence of spirit which was caused by these violent times had now abated. Yet, sure, Mr. Milton, whatever you may think of the character of King Charles, you will not still justify his murder."

"Sir," said Mr. Milton, "I must have been of a hard and strange nature, if the vehemence which was imputed to me in my younger days had not been diminished by the afflictions wherewith it hath pleased Almighty God to chasten my age. I will not now defend all that I may heretofore have written. But this I say, that I perceive not wherefore a king should be exempted from all punishment. Is it just that where most is given least should be required? Or politic that where there is the greatest power to injure there should be no danger to restrain? But, you will say, there is no such law. Such a law there is. There is the law of self-preservation written by God himself on our hearts. There is the primal compact and bond of society, not graven on stone, nor sealed with wax, nor put down on parchment, nor set forth in any express form of words by men when of old they came together; but implied in the very act that they so came together, presupposed in all subsequent law, not to be repealed by any authority, not invalidated by being omitted in any code; inasmuch as from thence are all codes and all authority.

"Neither do I well see wherefore you cavaliers, and indeed, many of us whom you merrily call Round-heads, distinguish between those who fought against King Charles, and specially after the second commission given to Sir Thomas Fairfax, and those who condemned him to death. Sure, if his person were inviolable, it was as wicked to lift the sword against it at Naseby as the axe at Whitehall. If his life might justly be taken, why not in course of trial as well as by right of war?

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"Thus much in general as touching the right. But, for the execution of King Charles in particular, I will not now undertake to defend it. Death is inflicted, not that the culprit may die, but that the State may be thereby advantaged. And, from all that I know, I think that the death of King Charles hath more hindered than advanced the liberties of England.

"First, he left an heir. He was in captivity. The heir was in freedom. He was odious to the Scots. The heir was favored by them. To kill the captive, therefore, whereby the heir, in the apprehension of all royalists, became forthwith king — what was it, in truth, but to set their captive free, and to give him besides other great advantages?

"Next, it was a deed most odious to the people, and not only to your party, but to many among ourselves; and, as it is perilous for any government to outrage the public opinion, so most was it perilous for a government which had from that opinion alone its birth, its nurture, and its defence.

"Yet doth not this properly belong to our dispute; nor can these faults be justly charged upon that most renowned Parliament. For, as you know, the high court of justice was not established until the House had been purged of such members as were adverse to the army, and brought wholly under the control of the chief officers."

"And who," said Mr. Cowley, "levied that army? Who commissioned those officers? Was not the fate of the Commons as justly deserved as was that of Diomedes, who was devoured by those horses whom he had himself taught to feed on the flesh and blood of men? How could they hope that others would respect laws which they had themselves insulted; that swords which had been drawn against the prerogatives of the king would be put up at an ordinance of the Commons? It was believed, of old, that there were some devils easily raised but never to be laid; insomuch that, if a magician called them up, he should be forced to find them always some employment; for, though they would do all his bid-

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ding, yet, if he left them but for one moment without some work of evil to perform, they would turn their claws against himself. Such a fiend is an army. They who evoke it cannot dismiss it. They are at once its masters and its slaves. Let them not fail to find for it task after task of blood and rapine. Let them not leave it for a moment in repose, lest it tear them in pieces.

"Thus was it with that famous assembly. They formed a force which they could neither govern nor resist. They made it powerful. They made it fanatical. As if military insolence were not of itself sufficiently dangerous, they heightened it with spiritual pride, — they encouraged their soldiers to rave from the tops of tubs against the men of Belial, till every trooper thought himself a prophet. They taught them to abuse popery, till every drummer fancied that he was as infallible as a pope.

"Then it was that religion changed her nature. She was no longer the parent of arts and letters, of wholesome knowledge, of innocent pleasures, of blessed household smiles. In their place came sour faces, whining voices, the chattering of fools, the yells of madmen. Then men fasted from meat and drink, who fasted not from bribes and blood. Then men frowned at stage-plays, who smiled at massacres. Then men preached against painted faces, who felt no remorse for their own most painted lives. Religion had been a pole-star to light and to guide. It was now more like to that ominous star in the book of the Apocalypse, which fell from heaven upon the fountains and rivers and changed them into wormwood; for even so did it descend from its high and celestial dwelling-place to plague this earth, and to turn into bitterness all that was sweet, and into poison all that was nourishing.

"Therefore it was not strange that such things should follow. They who had closed the barriers of London against the king could not defend them against their own creatures. They who had so stoutly cried for privilege, when that prince, most unadvisedly no doubt, came among them to demand their members, durst not wag their fingers when Oliver filled their hall with soldiers, gave their

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mace to a corporal, put their keys in his pocket, and drove them forth with base terms, borrowed half from the conventicle and half from the ale-house. Then were we, like the trees of the forest in holy writ, given over to the rule of the bramble; then from the basest of the shrubs came forth the fire which devoured the cedars of Lebanon. We bowed down before a man of mean birth, of ungraceful demeanor, of stammering and most vulgar utterance, of scandalous and notorious hypocrisy. Our laws were made and unmade at his pleasure; the constitution of our Parliaments changed by his writ and proclamation; our persons imprisoned; our property plundered; our lands and houses overrun with soldiers; and the great charter itself was but argument for a scurrilous jest; and for all this we may thank that Parliament: for never, unless they had so violently shaken the vessel, could such foul dregs have risen to the top."

Then answered Mr. Milton: "What you have now said comprehends so great a number of subjects, that it would require, not an evening's sail on the Thames, but rather a voyage to the Indies, accurately to treat of all: yet, in as few words as I may, I will explain my sense of these matters.

"First, as to the army. An army, as you have well set forth, is always a weapon dangerous to those who use it: yet he who falls among thieves spares not to fire his musquetoon, because he may be slain if it burst in his hand. Nor must States refrain from defending themselves, lest their defenders should at last turn against them. Nevertheless, against this danger statesmen should carefully provide; and, that they may do so, they should take especial care that neither the officers nor the soldiers do forget that they are also citizens. I do believe that the English army would have continued to obey the Parliament with all duty, but for one act, which, as it was in intention, in seeming, and in immediate effect, worthy to be compared with the most famous in history, so was it, in its final consequence, most injurious. I speak of that ordinance called the *self-denying*, and of the new model of the army. By those measures

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the Commons gave up the command of their forces into the hands of men who were not of themselves. Hence, doubtless, derived no small honor to that noble assembly, which sacrificed to the hope of public good the assurance of private advantage. And, as to the conduct of the war, the scheme prospered. Witness the battle of Naseby, and the memorable exploits of Fairfax in the west. But thereby the Parliament lost that hold on the soldiers and that power to control them, which they retained while every regiment was commanded by their own members. Politicians there be, who would wholly divide the legislative from the executive power. In the golden age this may have succeeded; in the millennium it may succeed again. But, where great armies and great taxes are required, there the executive government must always hold a great authority, which authority, that it may not oppress and destroy the legislature, must be in some manner blended with it. The leaders of foreign mercenaries have always been most dangerous to a country. The officers of native armies, deprived of the civil privileges of other men, are as much to be feared. This was the great error of that Parliament; and, though an error it were, it was an error generous, virtuous, and more to be deplored than censured.

"Hence came the power of the army and its leaders, and especially of that most famous leader, whom both in our conversation to-day, and in that discourse whereon I before touched, you have, in my poor opinion, far too roughly handled. Wherefore you speak contemptibly of his parts I know not; but I suspect that you are not free from the error common to studious and speculative men. Because Oliver was an ungraceful orator, and never said, either in public or private, anything memorable, you will have it that he was of a mean capacity. Sure this is unjust. Many men have there been ignorant of letters, without wit, without eloquence, who yet had the wisdom to devise, and the courage to perform, that which they lacked language to explain. Such men often, in troubled times, have worked out the deliverance of nations

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and their own greatness, not by logic, not by rhetoric, but by wariness in success, by calmness in danger, by fierce and stubborn resolution in all adversity. The hearts of men are their books; events are their tutors; great actions are their eloquence: and such an one, in my judgment, was his late Highness, who, if none were to treat his name scornfully now who shook not at the sound of it while he lived, would, by very few, be mentioned otherwise than with reverence. His own deeds shall avouch him for a great statesman, a great soldier, a true lover of his country, a merciful and generous conqueror.

"For his faults, let us reflect that they who seem to lead are oftentimes most constrained to follow. They who will mix with men, and specially they who will govern them, must, in many things, obey them. They who will yield to no such conditions may be hermits, but cannot be generals and statesmen. If a man will walk straight forward without turning to the right or the left, he must walk in a desert, and not in Cheapside. Thus was he enforced to do many things which jumped not with his inclination nor made for his honour; because the army, on which alone he could depend for power and life, might not otherwise be contented. And I, for mine own part, marvel less that he sometimes was fain to indulge their violence than that he could so often restrain it.

"In that he dissolved the Parliament, I praise him. It then was so diminished in numbers, as well by the death as by the exclusion of members, that it was no longer the same assembly; and, if at that time it had made itself perpetual, we should have been governed, not by an English House of Commons, but by a Venetian Council.

"If in his following rule he overstepped the laws, I pity rather than condemn him. He may be compared to that Mæandrius of Samos, of whom Herodotus saith, in his Thalia, that, wishing to be of all men the most just, he was not able; for after the death of Polycrates he offered freedom to the people; and not till certain of them threatened to call him to a reckoning for what he had

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formerly done, did he change his purpose, and make himself a tyrant, lest he should be treated as a criminal.

"Such was the case of Oliver. He gave to his country a form of government so free and admirable that, in near six thousand years, human wisdom hath never devised any more excellent contrivance for human happiness. To himself he reserved so little power that it would scarcely have sufficed for his safety, and it is a marvel that it could suffice for his ambition. When, after that, he found that the members of his Parliament disputed his right even to that small authority which he had kept, when he might have kept all, then indeed I own that he began to govern by the sword those who would not suffer him to govern by the law.

"But, for the rest, what sovereign was ever more princely in pardoning injuries, in conquering enemies, in extending the dominions and the renown of his people? What sea, what shore did he not mark with imperishable memorials of his friendship or his vengeance? The gold of Spain, the steel of Sweden, the ten thousand sails of Holland, availed nothing against him. While every foreign state trembled at our arms, we sat secure from all assault. War, which often so strangely troubles both husbandry and commerce, never silenced the song of our reapers, or the sound of our looms. Justice was equally administered; God was freely worshipped.

"Now look at that which we have taken in exchange. With the restored king have come over to us vices of every sort, and most the basest and most shameful, — lust without love — servitude without loyalty — foulness of speech — dishonesty of dealing — grinning contempt of all things good and generous. The throne is surrounded by men whom the former Charles would have spurned from his footstool. The altar is served by slaves whose knees are supple to every being but God. Rhymers, whose books the hangman should burn, pandars, actors, and buffoons, these drink a health and throw a main with the King; these have stars on their breasts and gold sticks in their hands; these shut out from his

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presence the best and bravest of those who bled for his house. Even so doth God visit those who know not how to value freedom. He gives them over to the tyranny which they have desired, '*Ἵνα πάντες ἐπαύρωνται βασιλῆος.*'"

"I will not," said Mr. Cowley, "dispute with you on this argument. But, if it be as you say, how can you maintain that England hath been so greatly advantaged by the rebellion?"

"Understand me rightly, Sir," said Mr. Milton. "This nation is not given over to slavery and vice. We tasted indeed the fruits of liberty before they had well ripened. Their flavor was harsh and bitter; and we turned from them with loathing to the sweeter poisons of servitude. This is but for a time. England is sleeping on the lap of Delilah, traitorously chained, but not yet shorn of strength. Let the cry be once heard — the Philistines be upon thee; and at once that sleep will be broken, and those chains will be as flax in the fire. The great Parliament hath left behind it in our hearts and minds a hatred of tyrants, a just knowledge of our rights, a scorn of vain and deluding names; and that the revellers of Whitehall shall surely find. The sun is darkened; but it is only for a moment; it is but an eclipse; though all birds of evil omen have begun to scream, and all ravenous beasts have gone forth to prey, thinking it to be midnight. Woe to them if they be abroad when the rays again shine forth!

"The king hath judged ill. Had he been wise he would have remembered that he owed his restoration only to confusions which had wearied us out, and made us eager for repose. He would have known that the folly and perfidy of a prince would restore to the good old cause many hearts which had been alienated thence by the turbulence of factions; for, if I know aught of history, or of the heart of man, he will soon learn that the last champion of the people was not destroyed when he murdered Vane, nor seduced when he beguiled Fairfax."

Mr. Cowley seemed to me not to take much amiss what Mr. Milton had said touching that thankless court, which had indeed

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but poorly requited his own good service. He only said, therefore, "Another rebellion! Alas! alas! Mr. Milton! If there be no choice but between despotism and anarchy, I prefer despotism."

"Many men," said Mr. Milton, "have floridly and ingeniously compared anarchy and despotism; but they who so amuse themselves do but look at separate parts of that which is truly one great whole. Each is the cause and the effect of the other; the evils of either are the evils of both. Thus do states move on in the same eternal cycle, which, from the remotest point, brings them back again to the same sad starting-post: and, till both those who govern and those who obey shall learn and mark this great truth, men can expect little through the future, as they have known little through the past, save vicissitudes of extreme evils, alternately producing and produced.

"When will rulers learn that, where liberty is not, security and order can never be? We talk of absolute power; but all power hath limits, which, if not fixed by the moderation of the governors, will be fixed by the force of the governed. Sovereigns may send their opposers to dungeons; they may clear out a senate-house with soldiers; they may enlist armies of spies; they may hang scores of the disaffected in chains at every cross road; but what power shall stand in that frightful time when rebellion hath become a less evil than endurance? Who shall dissolve that terrible tribunal, which, in the hearts of the oppressed, denounces against the oppressor the doom of its wild justice? Who shall repeal the law of self-defence? What arms or discipline shall resist the strength of famine and despair? How often were the ancient Cæsars dragged from their golden palaces, stripped of their purple robes, mangled, stoned, defiled with filth, pierced with hooks, hurled into Tiber? How often have the Eastern Sultans perished by the sabres of their own janissaries, or the bow-strings of their own mutes? For no power which is not limited by laws can ever be protected by them. Small, therefore, is the wisdom of those who would fly to servitude as if it were a refuge from commotion; for anarchy is the sure

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consequence of tyranny. That governments may be safe, nations must be free. Their passions must have an outlet provided, lest they make one.

"When I was at Naples, I went with Signor Manso, a gentleman of excellent parts and breeding, who had been the familiar friend of that famous poet Torquato Tasso, to see the burning mountain Vesuvius. I wondered how the peasants could venture to dwell so fearlessly and cheerfully on its sides, when the lava was flowing from its summit; but Manso smiled, and told me that when the fire descends freely they retreat before it without haste or fear. They can tell how fast it will move, and how far; and they know, moreover, that, though it may work some little damage, it will soon cover the fields over which it hath passed with rich vineyards and sweet flowers. But, when the flames are pent up in the mountain, then it is that they have reason to fear; then it is that the earth sinks and the sea swells; then cities are swallowed up; and their place knoweth them no more. So it is in politics: where the people is most closely restrained, there it gives the greatest shocks to peace and order; therefore would I say to all kings, let your demagogues lead crowds, lest they lead armies; let them bluster, lest they massacre; a little turbulence is, as it were, the rainbow of the state; it shows indeed that there is a passing shower; but it is a pledge that there shall be no deluge."

"This is true," said Mr. Cowley: "yet these admonitions are not less needful to subjects than to sovereigns."

"Surely," said Mr. Milton; "and, that I may end this long debate with a few words in which we shall both agree, I hold that, as freedom is the only safeguard of governments, so are order and moderation generally necessary to preserve freedom. Even the vainest opinions of men are not to be outraged by those who propose to themselves the happiness of men for their end, and who must work with the passions of men for their means. The blind reverence for things ancient is indeed so foolish that it might make a wise man laugh, if it were not also sometimes so mischievous that

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it would rather make a good man weep. Yet, since it may not be wholly cured, it must be discreetly indulged; and therefore those who would amend evil laws should consider rather how much it may be safe to spare, than how much it may be possible to change. Have you not heard that men who have been shut up for many years in dungeons shrink if they see the light, and fall down if their irons be struck off? And so, when nations have long been in the house of bondage, the chains which have crippled them are necessary to support them, the darkness which hath weakened their sight is necessary to preserve it. Therefore release them not too rashly, lest they curse their freedom and pine for their prison.

"I think, indeed, that the renowned Parliament, of which we have talked so much, did show, until it became subject to the soldiers, a singular and admirable moderation, in such times scarcely to be hoped, and most worthy to be an example to all that shall come after. But on this argument I have said enough: and I will therefore only pray to Almighty God that those who shall, in future times, stand forth in defence of our liberties, as well civil as religious, may adorn the good cause by mercy, prudence, and soberness, to the glory of His name and the happiness and honor of the English people."

And so ended that discourse; and not long after we were set on shore again at the Temple-gardens, and there parted company; and the same evening I took notes of what had been said, which I have here more fully set down, from regard both to the fame of the men, and the importance of the subject-matter.

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